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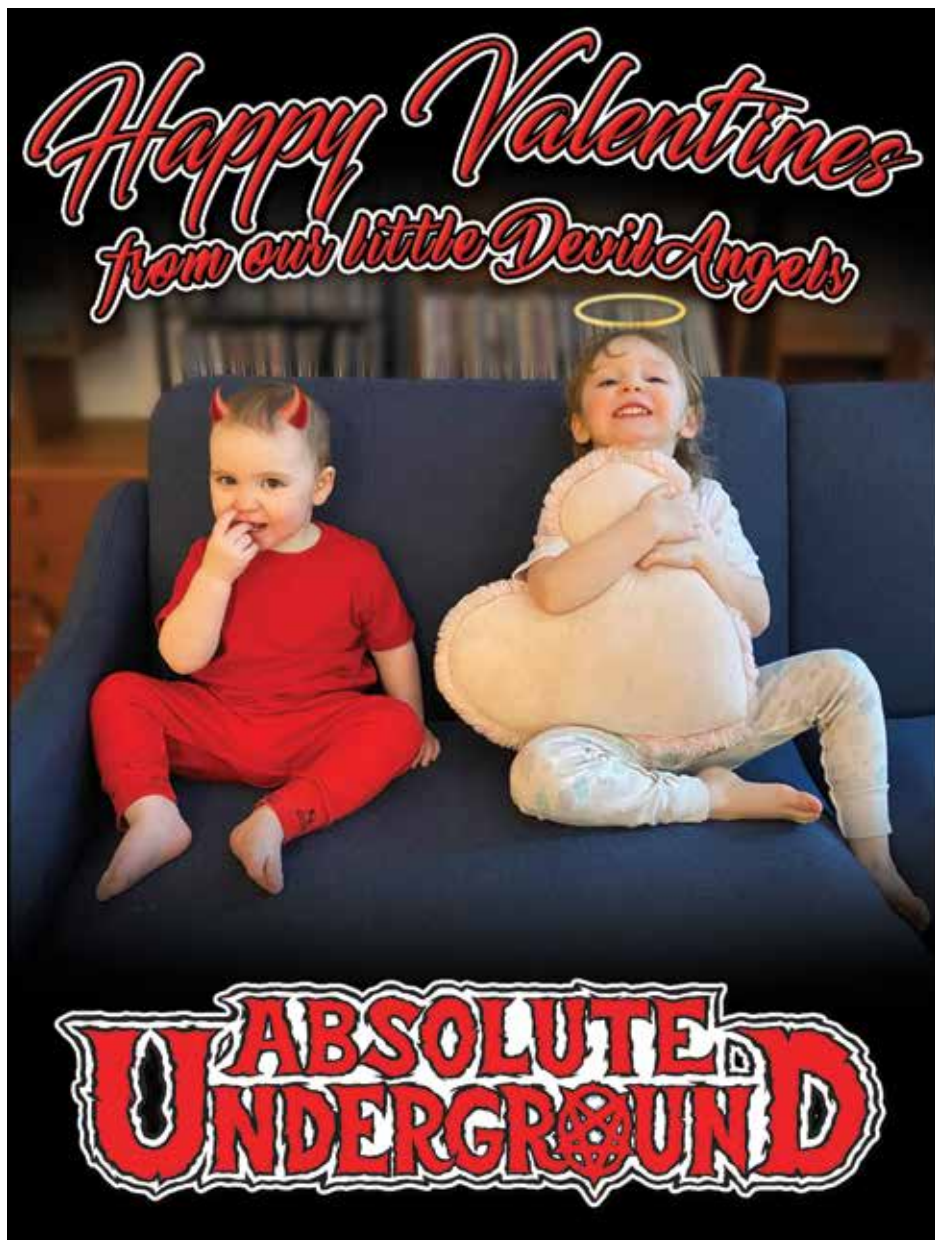
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SHARON

Interview & Photography by John Carlow
Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

SHARON: Shane Priestley: Guitar and vocals, formerly in Rigid Hog. Marlowe Pease: Drums. Leo Review: Bass guitar, sometimes vocals.

AU: When/how did the band come about?

Shane: Marlowe and I started the group in Grade 6 playing the worst prog rock you ever heard then Leo came in when we started playing in the Vic High RnB Band together. It took a year of messing around after that to finally arrive at the Sharon you know and love.

AU: Where did the name come from?

Shane: Well, Marlowe and I used to be big fans of Ozzy Osbourne and would constantly quote the Osbourne show, to pay homage to the hardest working wife in music history we named the band Sharon.

AU: Music backgrounds?

Marlowe: I only listened to Devo up until very

recently, now it's only Aphex Twin.

Leo: I don't know bro, Methwitch?

Shane: Ah.

AU: Creative process. How does a song come about?

SHARON: Ok, I'm gonna do a pizza analogy. Shane really kneads the dough before rehearsal, Leo spreads the secret sauce, and Marlowe, bless his heart, gently sprinkles the capers and anchovies. No cheese. I think that's pretty accurate.

AU: What are your songs about generally?

SHARON: Uhh, usually the songs are about superheroes and scary

monsters, but if I'm being frank, they are mostly metaphors for something deeper such as coitus.

AU: Recorded anything?

SHARON: Well, we have a pretty rushed and poorly recorded album out right now called Live at The Pease Palace, but we got something way better coming soon.

AU: Are Sharon brand contraceptives available at local pharmacies?

SHARON: No, they are only available at Sharon Centres for Sexual Wellness (SCSW).

AU: Who does wardrobe design for your band?

SHARON: Our consultant is a fella named Ru Paul. But we just wear our everyday clothes seasoned with some thrifted gems.

AU: There's a rumour out there you turned down an opening spot for Taylor at BC Place. Fact or fiction?

SHARON: Fiction! Mme. Swift may have told that lie but the truth is she asked to open for us at Little Fernwood. We left her on read.

VICTORIA LOCALS ONLY

AU: Most memorable show to date and why?

SHARON: Probably The Ritual, but honestly, we played our best on July 13th at the Little Fernwood last year. I guess the humidity was just on point.

AU: Thoughts on the local scene?

SHARON: The bands we have played with so far have been pretty fantastic. But it is unfortunate that the scene can only get so big when the all-ages venues have been limited to some

restaurants, the little Fernwood and maybe a chill church.

AU: Plans for the road ahead.

SHARON: Promote the upcoming album, get out of Vic and play some shows around Vancouver and Seattle, and then maybe cure Marlowe's gout.

AU: Any last thoughts?

SHARON: No, only dreams.

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Utility Provider

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Tyler: Hey this is Tyler, lead singer for Utility Provider. I guess I'm most infamous for always jumping off the stage, haha. I get such a kick out of the crowd reaction!

AU: Give us a brief history of Utility Provider.

Tyler: The band name Utility Provider stemmed from the idea that music is a utility we, as artists, provide to our listeners. UP has been active since 2013 and has performed hundreds of shows around Vancouver and its surrounding areas.

Over the years, the band has undergone several member changes, with band founder Chris Thomas (guitarist/vocalist) remaining the sole original member.

Chris has been a driving force in the band's sound and songwriting since 2013. Vadim Cartovenco, who immigrated to Canada in 2018, joined the band in 2022. He brings his technical mastery and powerful drumming to the UP sound, honed from playing in European metal bands with extensive touring experience. Tyler Mayfield (me), the band's dynamic frontman, joined the band in 2023 and boasts over a decade of experience and a powerful stage presence. Shayne Gold, a long-time veteran of the Vancouver music scene, joined in 2024, adding a unique and creative element to the band's bass sound.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Tyler: So, a few days ago we were playing our

new album *Challenger* for a friend and he said "Wow, I'm hearing different parts that sound like System of a Down, Gojira, Alice in Chains, Devin Townsend, and Deftones." Then another friend who was also listening with us said "I also hear Silverchair and Nirvana." We describe ourselves as progressive metal, but really, we are all individually influenced by so many different artists that it's hard to accurately describe our sound in just one dimension.

AU: How would you describe your live show?

Tyler: A ton of energy! I personally pride myself on always moving around on stage. My philosophy is that the more energy you put into your performance, the more you'll get back from the crowd. There is also a lot of interaction

between band members throughout the performance. We like to cultivate an atmosphere of enjoyment mixed with professionalism.

AU: *Challenger* just came out on November 26th. What can we expect to hear?

Tyler: When we set out to record *Challenger*, we knew that we wanted to take our fans on a unique, powerful, and intense listening experience. For that to happen, we made sure that no two songs sound alike. One

particularly cool element that we added to the album is the concept of a side A and a side B. Up until this album, all UP songs were written in drop C tuning. The first six songs of the album stay in that same drop C tuning; however, side B is written in A# tuning— it's literally a whole new sound for our fans! The transition from side A to side B is marked by a beautiful instrumental track written solely by Chris Thomas called "Northern Storm". We hope the listeners will enjoy this nuance within the album. We sure had a ton of

fun recording it!

AU: Did you have any challenges with production?

Tyler: No, thankfully we made sure to have everything in place before we hit the studio, so all would go as planned. We were also really lucky that our recording engineer, Nick Bergeron, and our mixing/mastering guy, Michael Kraushaar, were both extremely professional and great at what they do, so everything was really smooth right from the first tracking session. It was honestly the best recording experience I've ever had.

AU: Does it explore any particular themes?

Tyler: The overarching theme of *Challenger* is one of triumph over adversity and having the courage to throw off your "chains" (both physical and mental) and strike out on your own. We wanted our fans to be able to make a personal connection with the music and I think that this album will touch people on a very deep level

AU: Any stand-out tracks you're stoked on?

Tyler: I love the meaning behind "Scabs". It's all about surviving trauma and addiction and learning to shed your skin, or in other words peel away your 'scabs'. My favourite part of this whole album is during the last minute of this song. I won't say why, you just gotta hear it for yourself. I also love "Independent Soul" because it sounds like nothing else on the album. It's completely stripped down; no distortion, very clear vocals, minimal effects. It's just a beautiful track with a 'rock ballad' kind of feel.

Finally, we have "Social Murder". If "Independent Soul" is ice, then "Social Murder" is fire. It's literally a minute and 58 seconds of raging, in-your-face metal. I can listen to this track over and over again.

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE



AU: Any tour plans?

Tyler: Nothing concrete but we'd love to do a Canada/U.S tour! For any 'bigger' bands that might be reading, we'd love to be your opener and act as tour support! We do a great job of getting the crowd going.

AU: Final words of wisdom?

Tyler: Nerves before a performance are always a good thing! I can't recall who said it but I remember reading this great quote that really resonated with me: "If you no longer get nervous before a performance, it's time to hang it up because you probably don't really care anymore".

Utility Provider can be found on all the usual streaming platforms.

utilityprovider.bandcamp.com

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DICKENS



Anomalyptic

Interview by Hatchetface

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what is your role in Anomalyptic?

Cyn Mercredi on vocals and Bryan Newbury (Newbs) on Drums.

AU: Who is Anomalyptic made up of? How did you get together?

BN: Firstly, I came up with our moniker in high school while doodling band logos in my textbooks, listening to Sepultura, and not paying attention in class. After many years and many bands I had saved this idea for something special, the time had come to unleash Anomalyptic!

Jason Cullen (Sadistic Embodiment, Breaking the Silent) and I started the project shortly after his departure from Sadistic Embodiment.

We were extremely fortunate to recruit total slayer and badass Valkyrie Cyn Mercredi (DitchPisser, Tessitura, Kriticos) on vocals, YEG heavy concert mainstay and friendly face Craig Sexauer (Solar Coven) with his haunting melodies on lead guitar and local Viking stalwart Spencer Newcombe (Grand Mal, Revelator) bringing the thunder on bass. Some of my musical endeavors are Death Toll Rising, Untimely Demise, Into Eternity, and Sadistic Embodiment just to name a few.

Jason and I wrote our first 4 songs together but once our line up was complete, many more materialized out of thin air. The way it should be!



AU: Who are the biggest influences for the sound?

CM: We all have varied influences in terms of style and genre. From Sludge and Stoner to Blackened Death, Thrash, Groove, Nu Metal and Prog.

Each one of us brings our own preference and experience to the table.

So, in that regard I'd say we are mostly influenced by each other. We build off of one another and manage to stay inspired by what each one of us puts forward.

AU: Do you have plans to release a full length album in 2025?

BN: Our Debut EP is set to release in 2025 with select appearances booking across Canada and beyond.

AU: How does Anomalyptic fit into the Edmonton/Alberta metal scene?

CM: Every member of Anomalyptic is a familiar face in the local metal scene. We do our part to support local bands, venues and festivals and are fortunate enough to receive that same support for this project.

Myself, Newbs and Craig have been active members of Edmonton's metal scene for many years. And although Jason and Spencer have not been around as long, they have both left their mark and contribute their passion and dedication to making our scene bigger and better!

I think it's because of that history and dedication that we have the hype we do now. With members of Anomalyptic coming from well respected bands we are able to deliver a performance that makes people love Alberta metal even more.

AU: What does the writing process look like for Anomalyptic?

CM: Since our band is spread across different Cities and provinces it's difficult to get together to jam. Making our writing process a bit different than what I'm used to. Luckily we live in the age of technology and we're able to collaborate at a distance.

With the power of friends, home recording and



online file sharing we've been able to write our current repertoire of songs.

As Newbs mentioned, the EP we're currently working on had its foundation laid by himself and Jason before Spencer, Craig and myself joined the project. Their material definitely helped fill out the rest of the roster and speed up the writing process. Craig was able to write and add his leads with ease, Spencer was able to learn the material outside of the jam space and I was able to write some of my favorite lyrics which I perfected and recorded with my favourite studio Vector Sound. Although it may not be traditional, it forces each of us to do our homework making it easier to maintain a work/ life balance and stay dedicated to the band.

AU: What are some goals for the band?

CM: Honestly a goal is being fulfilled right here. Getting featured in Canada's best music Magazine, Absolute Underground!!!! So, thank you!

Some future goals for the band involve MORE SHOWS! Getting on some festivals, releasing multiple EPs or a full length, and putting out a music video or two... The list goes on.

We have a solid group here and I want to take

advantage of every opportunity to push our music as far as possible!

AU: What can guests expect at a live show?

BN: Anomalyptic's vivid and macabre imagery, theatrical performances and aggressive tones paint a dark picture of the world we live in so that we may revel in its catharsis as we hope for a future that is less draconian and bleak as the one we see before us...

AU: Any upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

CM: Yes!! On April 17th Anomalyptic will be joining Experimental Death Metal Quartet Brain Stem for the release of their new album Nullified!!

This will be an All Ages show at Temple / The Starlite Room in Edmonton, AB.

AU: Anything else you'd like to say?

CM: Get ready to experience the electrifying energy and unforgettable rhythms of Anomalyptic!! Coming to a stage near you!!

facebook.com/berserkerAB

instagram.com/anomalyptic

anomalyptic.bandcamp.com/

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Walkout

Interview by Kip Phillips

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Lyndon: We play an interesting mix of EMO-brand music based out of Calgary. We got together to make something grindy and the greasiest heavy style music possible.

Cam: It is a whole slew of influences that we've taken from everything we like, and put together with myself, Cam on vocals, Lyndon on bass and guitar, and Ethan on drums. We give it every single little walk of life that we possibly can in order to make it fun.

Ethan: It's exhausting.

AU: How did your band come about?

Cam: We were all working here at the Palomino, Ethan was working on bar, Lyndon was one of my cooks, and I was the chef. A lot of Palomino employees form bands, and come out to play shows.

Lyndon: For me, it was something that I formulated a long time ago in my brain with Cam. We met at the Ship and Anchor years ago, and he told me that he liked to sing in heavier bands and I was like, "That's sick. I want to play in a heavier

band." It wasn't possible until years later where we all worked in the same place at the same time, and we all thought, "let's do it now." That was about two years ago.

Ethan: Our first show was about two years ago in December, so this is our anniversary.

AU: Any favourite songs?

Cam: My favourite song is "Coming". When we first came up with it, I would do fills. I would just kind of yell rhythmically. So, for this one, I had a semblance of an idea, and it starts off with, "Fuck. What do you mean? It's a dead end. What do you mean? There's no way out. What do you mean? I'm alone. I feel them. I know it. They're coming."

It was impromptu, we suddenly decided we were doing an alien song. And I was like, Lyn, give us an alien riff, and then you hear it later in the song, and it's fucking sick. So that's the one for me.



Lyndon: My favourite song is the newest song that we just came out. It's called "Oppressed". I wrote it in a stint, writing music at home by myself in Toronto after we had just played a show last New Year's Eve, and felt really inspired by the other Calgary local bands.

Cam: We performed it after a hiatus due to Lyndon moving, and did one practice, and then did a show and it came together really easily.

Ethan: Our other new song is my favourite, "Plead". That one is really heavy, and really groovy. Like, we

kind of just fucking ripped that. We used to have this jam space in Inglewood in this shed, and Lyndon and I decided to get another song in the works. We ripped this fucking heavy riff and banged it out that day as well. And it's a tough song. It's not my favourite to play, but it's one of my favourites of our songs because when executed well, it just rips and holds.

AU: What is your best concert story?

Cam: Lyndon, Ethan, and I all agree that the bowl at Millennium Park was our best show so far. We played with TOAD as the headliner from Toronto. It took a crew of people to hoist all of the gear down there and set it up. One of our local buddies, Neil, set up the whole fucking thing, got us on there with another local band, Squelch and Close Tuckers. There was a moment where we were standing in the bottom of the full pit playing, and I looked up and there was like 200 kids, and people hanging on the top. There were people who were just walking by too with their kids, and stopping just to see how it played out.

CALGARY CARNAGE

Ethan: I might also add, it was like, 35 degrees that day, so fucking hot. It was a great set.

AU: Where can we find your tunes?

Cam: We have one EP on Bandcamp, and we have another full one ready to come out as soon as possible. It is already recorded, and ready to get mixed and mastered, and then we're in it, we're ready.

walkoutband.bandcamp.com

IG: walkout.band

Photos by Elsi Pie

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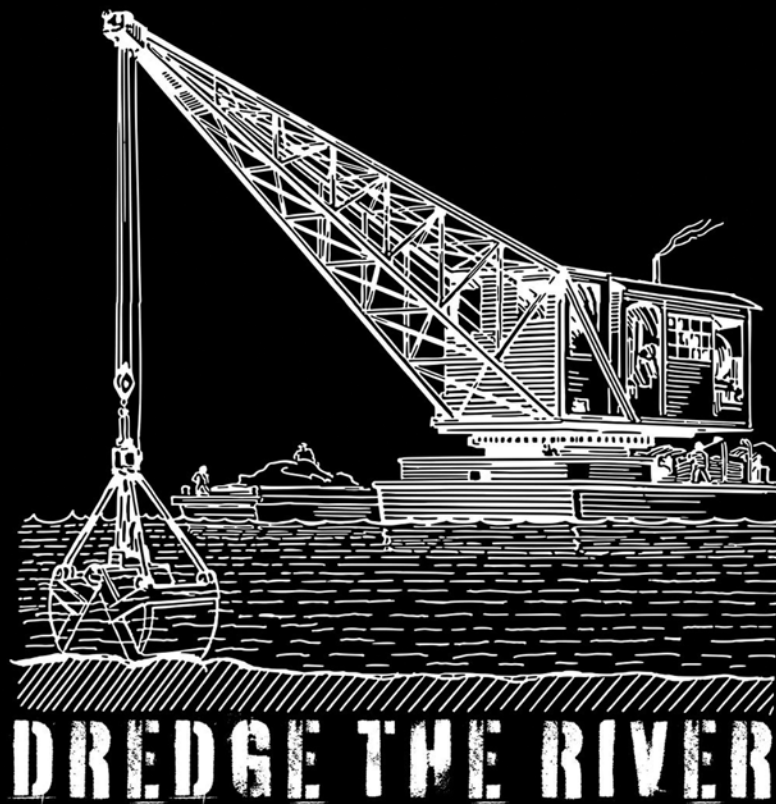
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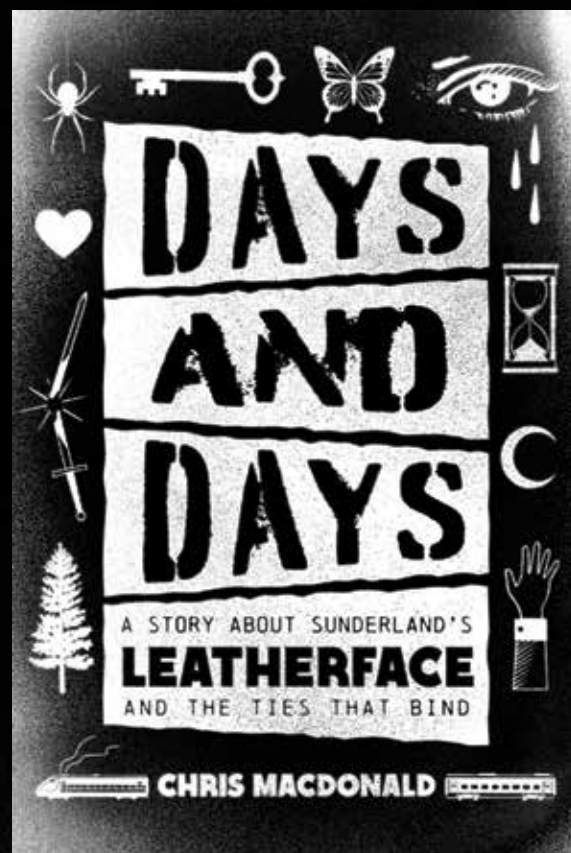


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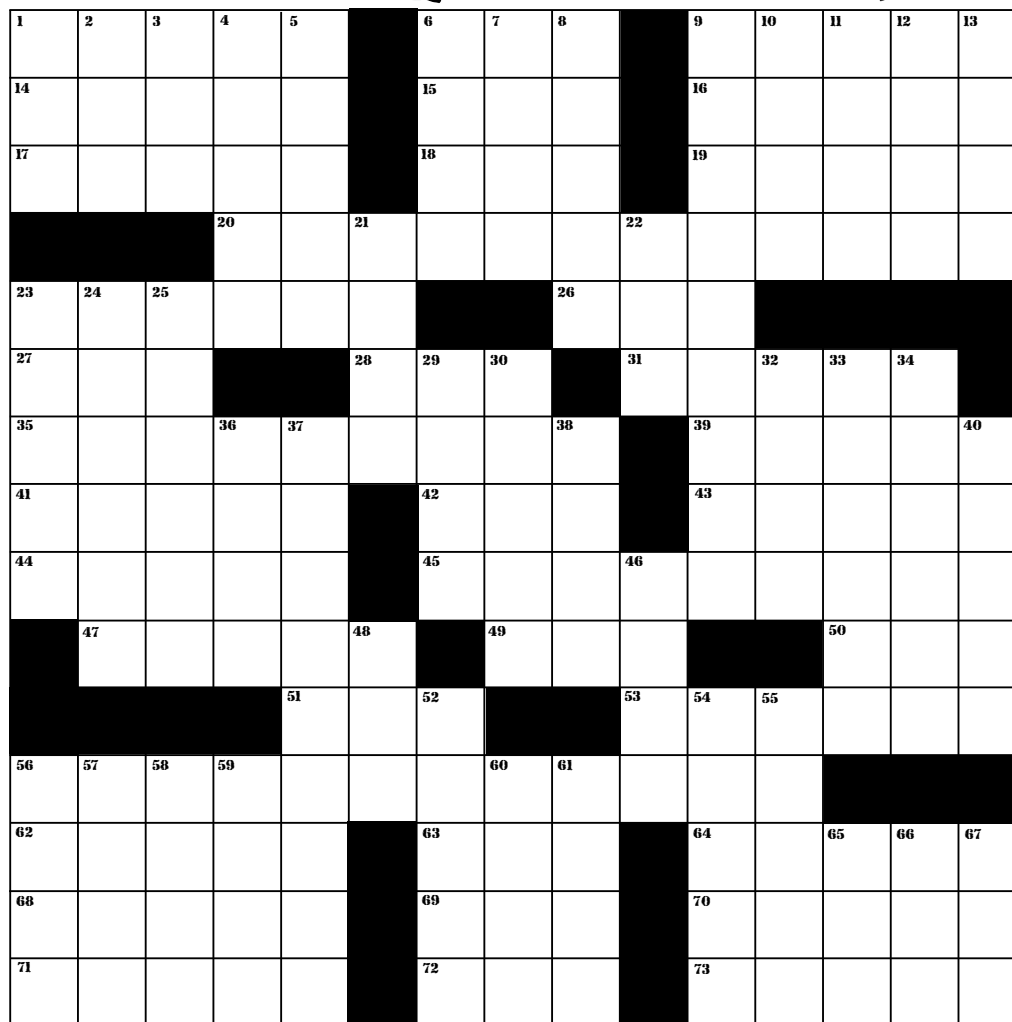
1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4

ACROSS

1. There's eight in this puzzle
6. Bikini top
9. Long-running MTV show
14. Able to endure hardship
15. Hearty haha
16. "You Are Not ____"
17. Options in some tests
18. Modern Punk genre
19. Really good party (slang)
20. Disappointing end to a Google search?
23. Singer of the Pretty Reckless
26. Gentle touch
27. UN group that sets workplace standards
28. Cleveland band Pere ____
31. Jackson of YA fiction
35. William Gibson's sci-fi genre
39. First century Roman emperor and his namesakes
41. Warning (from Spanish)
42. Electronics Co. owned by GE
43. Power or influence
44. Jack's love interest in "Nightmare Before Christmas"
45. It may have shows in the basement
47. Start speaking again
49. A gossip may spill some
50. The slammer or hoosegow
51. Mauna ____ volcano
53. Misleads
56. Retrofuturistic fans
62. Pitt film "Ad ____"
63. Akroyd
64. Japanese person obsessed with pop culture
68. Spinning engine part
69. Simpson judge
70. Penless?
71. "Ask ____"
72. Losing line in tic-tac-toe
73. Youthful energy

DOWN

1. Gangnam Style singer
2. Indigenous person in Utah
3. Fast and Furious gas
4. Koopa and Kong
5. "Four ____ and seven..."
6. One way to order a steak



CROSSWORD NO. 113

FEBRUARY, 2025

7. Win easily
8. One way to read
9. Forrest Gump's seat
10. ____ Bator
11. ____ zone
12. Was aware of
13. Actors Bruce or Laura
21. "Movin' ____" (theme from "The Jeffersons")
22. Siesta
23. Sparkly minerals
24. "Game of Thrones" prostitute
25. City in Alabama
29. Sound of a good meal?
30. Like some films and diamonds
32. Abbr. in a real estate ad
33. Common coughs for kids
34. ____ the bar high
36. Courses for new immigrants
37. A king's seal, for example
38. Bob who created Batman
40. Pool person in an office
46. Trendy cabbage
48. Yogurt-based drink
52. Video partner
54. Actor Jeremy
55. Legally block
56. Actress Gilbert or Foster
57. "Soul Train" theme song
58. Two of Caesar's last words
59. The King's middle name
60. Current military alliance
61. The Vibrators singer
65. ____ Dhabi
66. Relatives, down South
67. "That's gross!"

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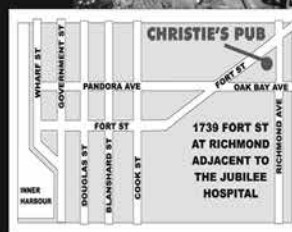
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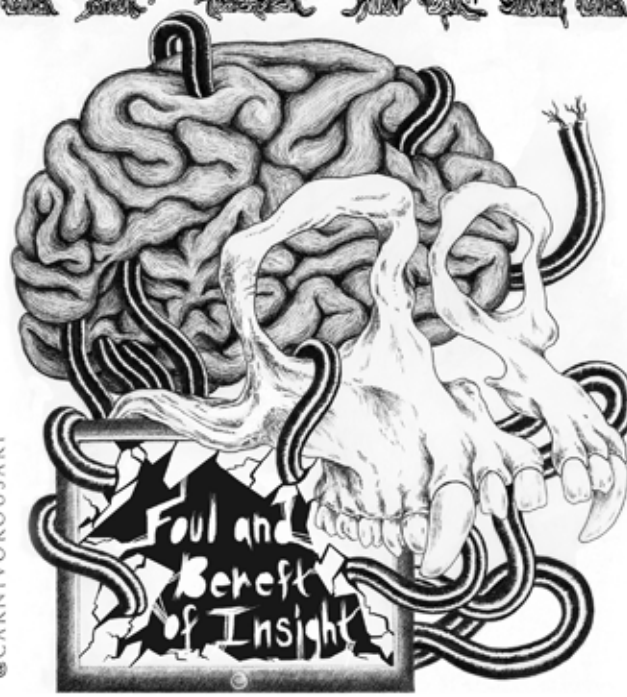


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Mad Parish

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Bob Eaglesham: My name is Bob Eaglesham, I'm one of the guitar players and back vocalist for the band. I'm also half of the songwriting team that made this record.

AU: Mad Parish is back with their first album *The Dust of Forever* since your debut in 2014... What can you tell us about this album?

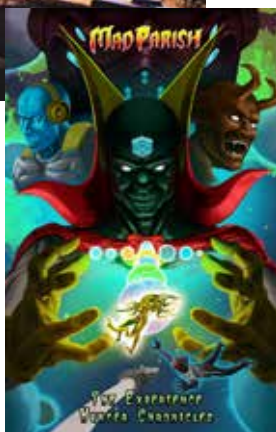
BE: Where the first album *Procession* (2014) is a straight up NWOBHM album, this new album is a full concept. Mad Parish has always had some prog elements to their songs, but for the second album we wanted to explore that much more. We cover a lot of musical territory on this record, not just metal. It's actually a little more like a '70s prog album than modern metal.

AU: The album is an original story written by Mad Parish that is told through the tapestry of a soundtrack... What more can you tell us

about this?

BE: "Experience Hunter" is a Mad Parish song on *Procession* that is inspired by a DC Comics 1985 release called *Me and Joe Priest*... in America of the future due to decades of war, pollution, and disease, human males have lost the power to sire children. The human race is dying out. Joe is the only man who has the power to procreate. He's the product from a past that is woven in a backdrop of twisted occultism and fanatical religion. Our new album's story (the experience hunter chronicles) takes place before and after the events of the aforementioned.

AU: After I listened to the album, I got a personal feeling on some tracks of hearing Ozzy singing over Rush... This is my personal way to describe it, how would you tell those



unfamiliar with Mad Parish what you sound like?

BE: Both Josh McConnell and myself are big fans of popular music like the Beatles and ABBA. We love melody, so all the songs we write generally have a singalong aspect to them. We've heard the Ozzy comparison many times, but you mentioning Rush is nice to hear because I've been a fan of Rush since I was in high school. There's a lot of Iron Maiden and Judas Priest influence as well.

AU: You put together a comic book to go with this album that fans can download and get a physical copy of, what can you tell us about the visual endeavour? Who wrote it, who drew it?

BE: We were fortunate enough to have met an independent artist from Montreal (Niall Skinner) whose artistic approach seemed to suit our new guit/synth galactic sound direction of the new album. The story itself was written by Josh with the help of a few others.

AU: Your music videos are like mini '70s B movies and we love them! How did you come up with the story lines for shooting these videos?

BE: Actually, most of the scenes you see in the videos are related to the album's story, interspersed with performances by the band.

AU: You use a very classic-sounding keyboard/organs on this album? What can you tell us about what you are using?

BE: Yes, we really wanted to have a classic '70s prog feel to the record so we chose mostly vintage sounds- Moog synths, Mellotrons, Hammond B3, vocoders, Farfisa, Clavinets and lots more.

AU: This record feels like a throwback to how albums used to be, a great amount of songs, stories, A, B sides, and more... Do you feel creating music has lost its origins of how it

MONTREAL MASSACRE

used to be when sitting down with an album?

BE: When I was young, vinyl was the way you experienced music. You went to the record store, bought the album, brought it home, and then sat there and listened to it. You weren't doing anything else, you were immersed in the music. In some ways digital music has made that experience much more casual, so I feel some impact gets lost. We're hoping that since this new album is essentially a soundtrack, maybe listeners can recapture that immersive element.

AU: Any plans to tour? Upcoming Live shows you would like to mention?

BE: We're in the process of rehearsing a new lineup to play these songs, so there will be shows on the horizon for sure.

AU: Where can people get your comic book, vinyl and digital for the album?

BE: The album will be released on January 31st, and it will be available on our Bandcamp. There will be updates soon on our website as well.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

BE: We hope you like the new album!

madparish1.bandcamp.com





MUTANK

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Stephen: We are MUTANK, thrash-metal mutants hailing from Montreal! We kick out face-paced metal tracks meant to get you hyped up and shaking your skull.

AU: It's been seven years since releasing EP *W.H.A.T.S.T.H.A.T.* and we saw you on tour across Canada with Annihilator and Mason from Australia. Now you're back with your new album *Think Before You Think*, released this past November on Boonsdale Records, what can you tell us about it?

Stephen: This album is the culmination of a lot of work and passion and it's really a big step forward for the band. The tracks show an evolution of our sound from our early days as we're not content to just stand still and write the same songs. Compared to our earlier work, I would say this

album hits more of a "classic thrash" note like early Metallica and Megadeth but still capturing our signature sound. It's 10 tracks that keep a steady theme of speedy thrash while also giving variety within that style. We hope you will all check it out and enjoy it, it's a wild ride!

AU: After a hiatus... would you say this is your comeback album for fans and is there more to come from MUTANK?

Stephen: We definitely see this album as a way of throwing our hat back in the ring. The band has been through a lot in the past several years and at times there were questions as to whether it would continue, but it's become evident that MUTANK has a life of its own and can't really be stopped, even if we tried. We certainly have more to come in the near future and we wanna make up for lost time and give our fans lots of meat to chew on, so stay tuned; it won't be long before you hear more about our next move!

AU: Your "Illuminatus" video was done with AI. It seems to be the new trend for a lot of bands these days, what made you decide to release a video this way?

Stephen: It started out as an experiment but grew into a full-fledged video. Due to circumstances, we were down one music video that was supposed to be released with the album, and at the time I decided to experiment with AI video. It was really a solution for us to make sure we had some visuals to release with the album, but I like how it came out, it's pretty tongue-in-cheek and is meant to poke fun at AI and the band itself while fitting with the theme of the song which is about the consequences of chasing power for power's sake. I feel like AI will advance



so fast that making this video using its early iteration and showing the weird stuff, it comes up with quickly becomes nostalgic in a way, sort of like old computer graphics like Lawnmower Man.

AU: You're quoted as "The lyrics for 'Abortron' are disgusting and no one should read them." How bad can it be...?

MONTREAL MASSACRE

Stephen: Well, we went ahead and put out a "lyric video" for the song so you can find out for yourself if you really dare! It's up on our YouTube channel "MUTUBE" for those who are morbidly curious. Don't worry, we put some cute animals to accompany the gruesome story the lyrics portray. The song is meant to be so disgusting and taboo that it's ridiculous on its face and takes on a certain absurd tone almost like an over-the-top action movie that handles the subject matter with complete seriousness. In the end, there is a message to the song for those who like to look a bit deeper into lyrics which is something I try to do with almost all my lyrics.

AU: How's the thrash scene in Montreal these days?

Stephen: The thrash scene in Montreal always seems to be there holding the torch in the background just waiting to explode, and we feel like it could still happen. We've got some well-established groups still lurking around and some fresh blood entering the scene. We hope with our return to begin to contribute once again and we feel like it's never a bad time to thrash!

AU: Any plans to tour across Canada this year? Or beyond?

Stephen: We have some plans for shows around Canada but nothing to announce as of yet. Having been on hiatus means we've got some momentum to build, but we are doing what we can to put together some awesome stuff for our fans, so stay tuned!

AU: Anything you would like to add?

Stephen: Would just like to say TANK MU to all our fans who waited patiently for this latest release and to everyone who has been checking it out! We really appreciate and love you all and you can expect more from us soon! PEACE.

mutankthrash.bandcamp.com



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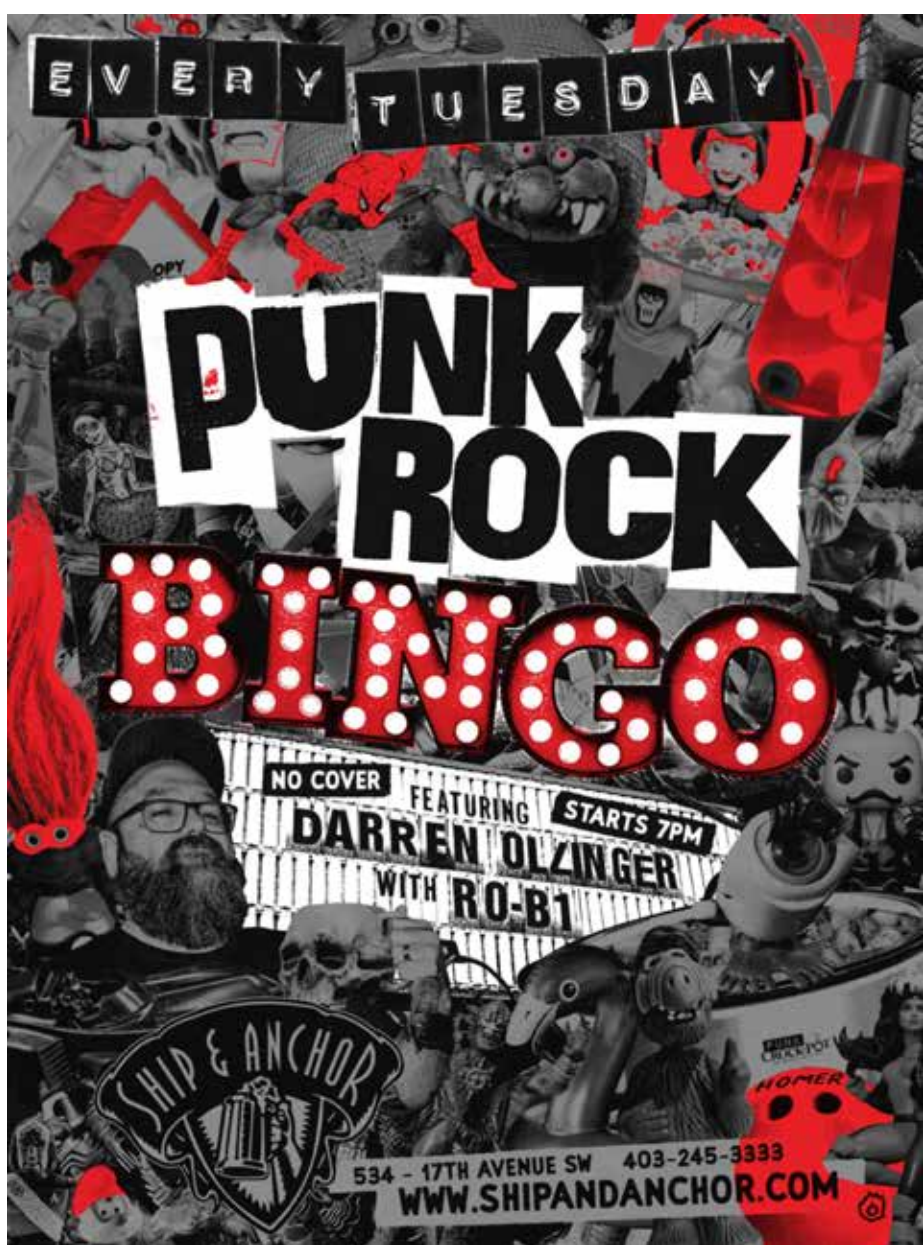
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They Might Be Fascists

Interview by Bowser Tabarnak

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?

They Might Be Fascists: You are talking to They Might Be Fascists.

AU: Give us a brief history of your band.

TMBF: We started nearly a decade ago as the no-stress side-project of a few folks from the Toronto acts Delinquents, You Handsome Devil and Killer Wails. Since then, all of those acts have come to their end and TMBF slowly became our principal project.

AU: Does your band have a specific message to give?

TMBF: TMBF is our way of making sense of our place in a world that is, in some cases, literally going up in flames. Capitalism has rewarded humanity's worst impulses and continues to promote environmental devastation on a global scale. Those with money peddle an idealized concept of upward mobility that is impossible to achieve for anyone who did not inherit multiple millions of dollars the day they were born, and so the wealthy have become de-facto monarchs, thus destroying the spirit of democracy altogether. We're not saying anything new, shocking, or even all that interesting. Everyone has been living this nightmare for so long that we're hardly even angry about it anymore. We're just disappointed, and the worst part is that one day it will be over, and we'll still be sad.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

TMBF: We like things loud, fast and distorted. We don't demand much of our listeners' time. Life moves fast. People have shit to do. We understand that. You can easily fit a TMBF record into your daily grind and then get back to doing the dishes, or laundry, or planning a revolution, or yoga or whatever.

AU: What is your creative process like?

TMBF: We basically meet up once or twice a week and discuss various social issues until we get mad or depressed enough to translate that displeasure into riffs and beats.

AU: Have you released an album or any songs recently?

TMBF: Sort of. We released our first record called *Displendent* just before a global pandemic kicked in and made us even more sad, depressed, and



fearful for humanity than usual. Now, we are promoting it a bit more, and this [last] December we [released] an anti-capitalist X-Mas anthem called "Merry Anarchistmas" for sale on Bandcamp and available for streaming wherever you stream songs.

AU: In your opinion, what is wrong with the music scene now?

TMBF: Actually, we're of the opinion that the music scene has never been more accessible and egalitarian than it is right now. Everything from recording and production to promotion and distribution is closer to democratization than it has ever been, and if you are a zealous music fan, you can expose yourself to so much more than radio or music television would have brought you in the past.

AU: What are some of things your band does to give back to the community?

TMBF: We try to institute a NOTAFLOP policy at our shows so long as we have the consent of all of the performers and promoters. In the past, we have helped organize large parking lot punk shows that have raised over a thousand dollars in donations to local anti-fascist and community outreach programs. [Last] year, we [donated] all profits from the sale of our X-Mas song "Merry Anarchistmas" to BookClubsForInmates.com who work to fund libraries and book club programs for incarcerated people all over Canada.

AU: What are some of your best songs about?

TMBF: Most of our songs are about survival and mindfulness in a decaying civilization. There's one song

about weed. That about covers it.

AU: Describe your bands live show verbally if you can.

TMBF: Loud, fast, intense and over before you'd like it to be.

TORONTO TRASH

AU: What's the music scene like in Toronto these days?

TMBF: There are less venues than there used to be, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Obviously that means fewer places to play, but on the other hand the scene is getting more creative with where they have shows. Some folks are doing them in the back of dive bars and restaurants with no stage or lights. Some folks are doing them in warehouses, garages and storefronts. Some are doing them in their backyards. It's kind of exciting, to be honest.

AU: Any shows or tours planned?

TMBF: We don't play many shows. Since we started as a band, we average two thirds of a show per year. [Last] year, we did three shows, which is more than our collective social anxiety can reasonably take, so we're going to go underground again for the winter and hopefully come back out with a new record. Wish us luck!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

TMBF: Thanks for reading! You are a top-notch human, and exceptionally good looking too!

AU: How do people find you online?

TMBF: We're on Insta and Fashbook. Buy our music at theymightbefascists.bandcamp.com, and stream us wherever you like to do your streaming.

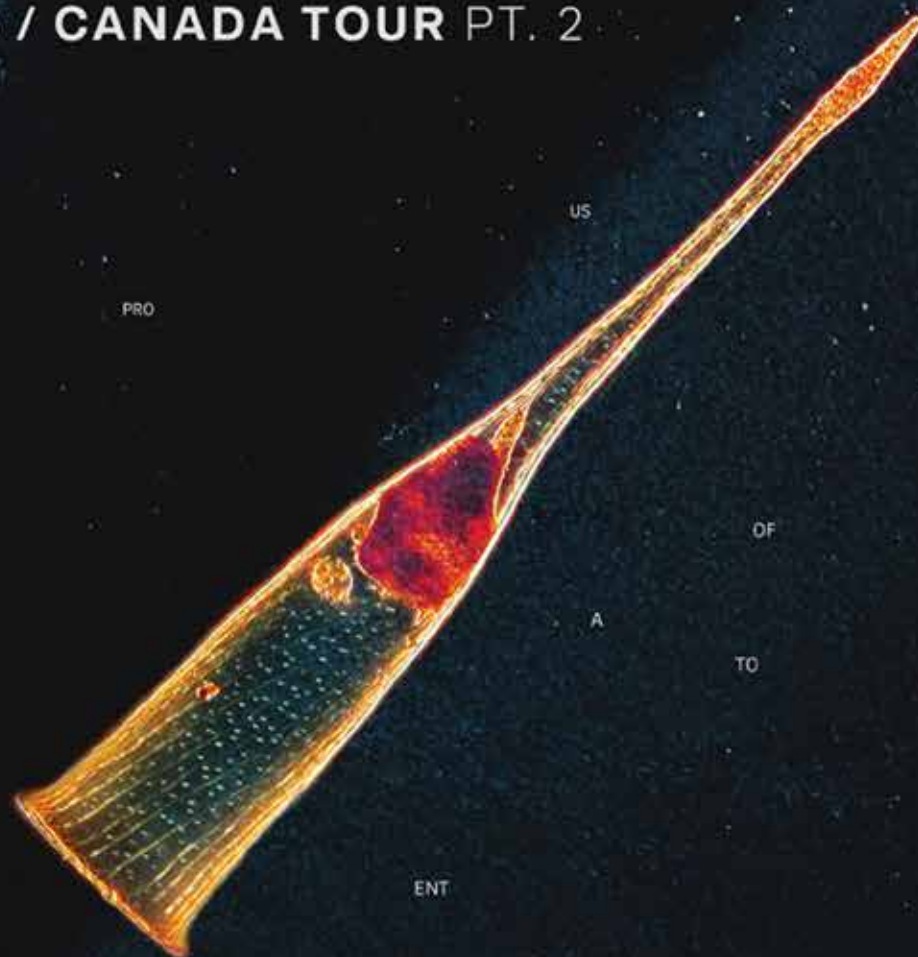
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NIGHT CHILL

Evil Abounds!

Interview by B.A. Johnston and Ira Hunter

AU: Who are you and what are you groan for?

Night Chill: We are Night Chill! We are most known for occult caped antics, sonic spell-casting, and ghastly sounds!

AU: Who is in the band and what does it say on their Tinder profiles?

Thea: Black hearted, prefers to dig up dates in the local cemetery.

Jerome: Let's bone!

Adam Invader: Black magic and ritual perversions at your desecrated altar, or mine?

Adam Vez: I'm a mummy!

Denton Dastardly: At midnight I'll take your soul... and pictures of your feet!

AU: Give us a grief history of your band.

NC: Possessed by the powers of evil, on one dark and stormy evening, five years ago, Adam Invader, Thea Triffid, and Denton Dastardly came together to conjure their first haunted melodies. The unholy circle was completed after putting a call into the blackest abyss to bring the most sinister new members. Out of the ether, Vez and Jerome appeared and joined Night Chill in eternal wickedness.

AU: Sex, drugs, or rock n' roll? Or all of the above?

NC: Yes to all... but in the reverse order!

AU: Describe the band's sound and live show.

NC: Like experiencing a carnival haunted house ride mixed with a forbidden occult ritual. Add the sound of a thousand spirits channelled through the theremin ripping a hole into your skull!

AU: Have you released an album recently? If so, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

NC: Last year we released a 7" called *Crypt Tide*. It will possess your turntable with evil imps!

AU: Does the album explore any themes?

NC: Horror, the macabre, black magic, and the Weekly World News.

AU: Any killer tracks to wake the dead?

NC: "Queen of Blood" is always a fiend favourite and "Bat Boy" is an anthem that never dies!

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

NC: Night Chill has a Valentine's Day Scream Date show at Clifford's Brewing Company with The Squids and Danger Death Ray.

AU: Any dating/marriage advice for this post-pandemic world?

NC: Nothing brings the romance like apocalyptic rituals designed to bring about the end of the world and the end of humankind.



AU: Any fetishes to share?

NC: Torture Chambers, blood drinking, profane rituals, necromancy, grave-robbing, Barbara Steele and vintage monster toys

AU: Any other wicked Hamilton bands?

NC: Nasu, Danger Death Ray, Hex Offender

AU: Any upcoming gigs or funeral processions?

NC: On Easter weekend we play Vertagogo's The Takeover, a weekend long anniversary party. We are also looking forward to The Great Lakes Surf Battle in Toronto, at See-scape, on June 13th.

AU: What's your fave submarine sand-witch shop in town and what's your go-to order?

NC: Night Chill prefers to savour the screams of pain and ecstasy from willing victims... the taste of blood spilled in an occult ritual beats out sloppy sandwiches every day, as our demonic overlords demand!

AU: You ever wear shorts on stage. If not, why not? How hot would it have to be to get you to wear them on stage?

NC: We played in surf attire, with shorts, for a bash at Doors Pub once, and it wasn't very hot. The pale flesh of our legs are the least scary part of us.

AU: You are trapped in a hotel for 24 hours alone with a VCR. What tapes you bringing?

NC: Burial Ground, The Blind Dead series, The Beyond, City of the Living Dead, The Devil's Rain, Dunwich Horror, Psychomania, Devil Rides Out, Suspiria, The Wicker Man, House on Haunted Hill, and Horror Hotel.

AU: How do you ghouls get to shows? Describe your band ride.

HAM JAMMERS



NC: Thea drives a 1954 Pontiac hearse named Hearsella which she will take to gigs once in awhile.

AU: Anything else to mention?

NC: We have a new digital-only dirge called "Dungeon of Death" that will render the flesh from your bones!!

AU: Final Words.

NC: Memento mori.

nightchill.bandcamp.com

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NUMB

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous for?

SENTA: This is SENTA. I'm the singer of NUMB, and the guitarist of Eternal B. I've been playing in NUMB nonstop for 30 years.

AU: Where are you from and what's the

underground music scene like there? What bands do you think Canadians should check out?

SENTA: We are from Tokyo, Japan. There's a big underground music scene here. There are many... Saigan Terror, Sand, Loyal to the Grave, Dominate...

AU: Who or what inspires you musically and aesthetically?

SENTA: I love '90s movies and music. I'm especially influenced by Quentin Tarantino, Luc Besson, Takeshi Kitano, Japanese hardcore, New York hardcore, Roadrunner Records, Victory Records...



AU: How would you describe your sound to those that haven't heard you?

SENTA: '90s Japanese heavy groove hardcore.

AU: How do you approach writing music? What are your lyrics about?

SENTA: Short and hard. I sing about social topics and everyday trivial things, and a lot of other things. Recently, I have been writing songs about traditional Japanese occupations.

AU: Are you currently working on any new music?

SENTA: Yes, we have a new album. It will be

ABSOLUTE ASIA

released on Triple B records, maybe in the spring. The title has not been decided yet.

AU: Do you have any plans to tour internationally? Would you ever come to Canada?

SENTA: We hope to! I would like to go to Canada.

AU: Any advice for our readers?

SENTA: You can do whatever you want to do.

X/IG: @senta76 @numb_thc numb.jp

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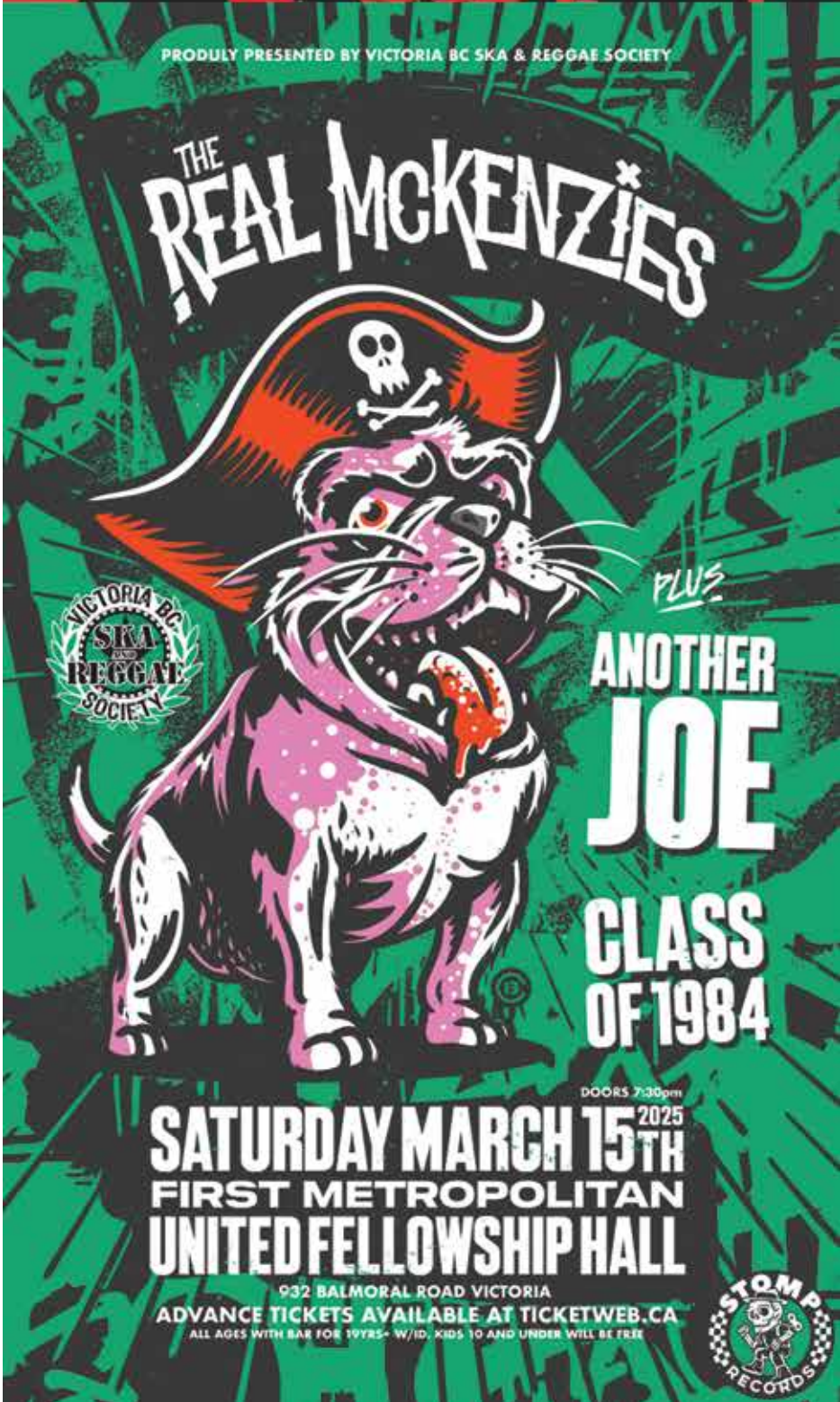
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AMERICAN IMPORT

Chain Code

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Welcome to Absolute Underground, who are and what do you do?

MuRphry: My name is MuRphry and I am the main brain behind Milwaukee, Wisconsin's progressive rock band, Chain Code.

AU: You released your album *Synthetic Outcomes* this past October, what can you tell us about it?

MuRphry: I can tell you it is off-kilter progress rock for fans of Adrian Belew and all associated bands (King Crimson, Talking Heads, Zappa, etc). I also feel Voivod fans will be able to feel that influence, as well. Thematically, *Synthetic Outcomes* concern the AI uprising that will inevitably dominate and mutate the human condition.

AU: As a one-man band, how does it feel to put this all together and release it to the world?

MuRphry: It feels excellent. I am quite proud of the release, worked very hard on it, and am flattered by some of the comments I have received.

AU: Your stage name is MuRphry, what can you tell us about this... MuRphry?

MuRphry: I love *Robocop*.

AU: Your band name comes from *Star Wars* inspiration, let's geek on... What's your take on all these new *Star Wars* shows and which one is your fave...? Which *Star Wars* character do you think would be the best musical guest on your next release?

MuRphry: I hesitated to call this project Chain Code, because thematically the band is not associated with *Star Wars*, however, the name was taken from two of the modern shows I enjoy- *The Clone Wars* and *The Bad Batch*. It represents a technological system of monitoring movement and behaviour, which captures the lyrics. The album was finished before I named the band. I think a lot of new *Star Wars* canon is basically crap, but when it's good it's great. *Mandalorian* is mostly good, as are the two mentioned above, but the rest is very hit-and-miss, with a lot of misses. I would invite Lama Su to provide central scrutinizer (Zappa) style narration.

AU: Will you be taking Chain Code to a live stage in the near future?

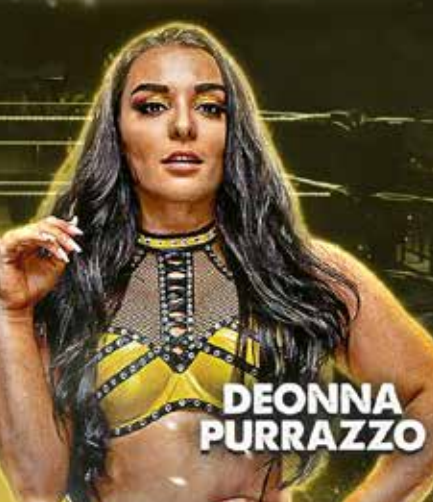
MuRphry: Unfortunately, probably not in the near future. Not opposed to future gigs, if the right group of oddballs can play the songs and an offer is worth the work. I am content just writing more!

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Porch Light Tattoo

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are your skills to pay the bills?

Isaac Holland: My name is Isaac Holland and I own Porch Light Tattoo. I've been tattooing for 11 years. I'm also a painter and art show curator.

AU: What got you started as an artist?

IH: I have been an artist since forever, I guess. Even as a kid, I was really into drawing, painting, and sculpting. Then in my teen years, I got into graffiti through skateboarding. In my 20s I moved to Montreal to find more spots to paint and to go to Concordia University for painting, drawing and print-making, but dropped out after three years. I quit my job at a Montreal restaurant and went directly to a tattoo shop and asked for a job. I took the job as a counter guy/piercing apprentice at Slicks Tattoo to get my foot in the door. I told the owner that my goal was to eventually get into tattooing. I would do any job in the shop, working seven days a week, in the hopes of getting a tattoo apprenticeship.

AU: Who did you apprentice under?

IH: In Montreal, Bill Gray, who worked at Slicks and had been tattooing for 10 or so years eventually took me on as his apprentice along with my friend Devin Wood. The shop had a real family vibe, and I was definitely the little brother there. To this day, I feel incredibly lucky that I had such a solid education from a group of people who really cared about me and about tattooing at large. I should also mention the impact that Max Lara, who was also an experienced tattooer at Slicks at the time, had on me in the early years. He took on a mentorship role as well, even though he wasn't officially my mentor. Also, a big shout out to the owner Richard for giving me a chance and keeping me on even though I was such a shit

head.

After my apprenticeship, I went to work at another Slicks location in St. Anne de Bellevue for a couple years before moving back to Victoria at the age of 29. In Victoria, I worked at Empire Tattoo for two years and three years at Second Street Tattoo in Sidney. I recently finished three years at Tiger Tattoo in Victoria until I opened Porch Light Tattoo in November 2023.

AU: Why did you decide to open your own shop?

IH: I decided to open Porch Light Tattoo a year and a bit ago pretty much at the exact same time we found out my wife was pregnant with our first child. It's always been a dream of mine to have a place where I could create a temple to tattooing while also having space to put on shows and bring people together. Whether it's curating tattoo and graffiti art shows or whatever, I just want to keep these things in my life in the way that gets me excited and hopefully pass that excitement on to the people around me.

AU: Tell us about Porch Light Tattoo.

IH: Porch Light cares about tattooing and wants it to live a continued life of integrity and tradition, experimentation and growth. The name of the shop to me is a feeling of arriving home after a long road trip, seeing that porch light on and the feeling of knowing that you're finally home.

AU: Who is currently working there? Do you ever get guest artists?

IH: Right now, the tattooers are Celeste Brown, Jada Thompson, and myself. Celeste and Jada are both newer tattooers who are motivated and curious. They have amazing apprenticeships under their belts with people I respect and admire. Celeste apprenticed under Colin Wiley, owner of Parksville Tattoo and Jada apprenticed under Jory Helmes, owner of Lucky Toad Tattoo, as well as mentorship from Kaija Heitland. I'm stoked to have them both around and I think they'll teach me just as much as I can teach them. Also shout out to Ian Olsen who recently left the shop to move back to Ontario but was a huge part of the shop in the beginning.

We also have Andrew Robertson sometimes coming in to do tattoos and a steady flow of other guest artists. To name who we've had so far: Paige Fahie, Jordan Frank, Irv Santana, Ben Wilki, Karissa Prichard, Catlyne Fable, Vuducats,

Brooke Roberts, and Leon Sturgeon. We've also had a brilliant machine seminar by Trevor Mackay; I learned a lot and am super down to more seminars if anyone is interested. The end of February around the upcoming Skulls and Snakes



art show, we are hosting Dillon Leask, Trevor Mackay, Richard Harding, Ben Wilki as guest artists. Other tattooers might be coming as well around that time.

AU: How would you describe your shop's style?

IH: The shop doesn't have a specific style of tattooing. I think it's good to have variety.

I do more of a Japanese/illustrative style, if I had to describe it. No matter what

I'm tattooing, I try to bring a Japanese approach to it, but it's not traditional Japanese by any stretch.

Jada is into neo traditional tattoos with a sort of bio-mechanical approach, but is also doing a lot of black and grey stipple work and medieval-style tattoos.

Celeste does traditional stuff, but is learning and expanding.

We're all down to do anything that walks through the door as well- no judgement!

AU: Are you looking to welcome any tattoo artists onto the team?

IH: We do have space for someone else to come join the team, but I'm not in any rush to fill it. I like having

space for guest artists to come work, but if the right person comes along with the right experience, I'd be happy to expand the team.

AU: Does anyone from your shop ever go to any conventions or guest at other shops?

IH: All three of us at the shop have been talking about guest spots and conventions, but no solid plans yet. I'm still in my first year of being a dad, so

my family is something I'm really want to focus on. Our family is planning a little tattoo road trip this summer though, aiming to hit Vancouver, Nelson, Kelowna, Calgary and then hopefully get down to Oakland, California. Other than that, keep your eyes peeled as I am definitely planning on taking the shop to some conventions in the future.



AU: Anything else you'd like us to know?

IH: We are having a huge tattoo art show at Porch Light on February 28th themed Skulls and Snakes. Come check out the work of 120 works from artists from all over the world. Music and beer, 6:00 - 10:30. 201-1821 Cook St. Victoria, BC.

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New Skeletal Faces

Interview with Errol Fritz & Don Void

By Sheldon "Old Flesh Singular Face" Byer

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous for?

New Skeletal Faces: It seems we're known for not only transcending genres, but also going beyond just music and stage presence. It's a lifestyle. We tend to make an unhinged impression everywhere we go.

AU: For anyone who hasn't heard New Skeletal Faces— describe your sound.

NSF: I don't really know how to explain our sound. People always ask. I simply just write songs with no intention of sounding a specific way. I just aim for the "NSF sound." But yeah, I get it, people need genres and definitions. Blackened death-glam? I don't know. It's dark and atmospheric rock n' roll. We're thrown into the deathrock category, and sometimes metal. I don't think we sound like either.

AU: You recently signed to Peaceville Records

and released your sophomore album *Until the Night*. This album is extremely impressive in terms of genre blending and bending, not to mention the immaculate song structure. If you had to pick one choice cut, what would it be? Not the Bathory cover, just to be clear.

NSF: "Enchantment of My Inner Coldness" is a song we like. Mainly because its approach is different from anything we've done. It's a songwriting direction we always wanted to go. Very melodic and sombre-sounding. "Disexist" was the first track written for the album and a favourite to play live, that said when we do listen to the record, we feel drawn to "Zeitgeist Suicide", "Pagan War", and also revisiting the unreleased track "Deterioration" (releasing on the Decibel Flexi series next month) has been enjoyable.

AU: Speaking of the Bathory cover, it's a great cover! Totally your unique spin on a classic Bathory slab. Given the massive influence early black metal has on your sound— let's go in the opposite direction for Valentine's Day, because I know one of you is a ballad slut— what's the sappiest song NSF would cover?

EF: Haha, one of my favourite questions I've been asked in the history of interviews. I love ballads. My favourite might be "Alone Again" by Dokken. I'd never cover it though. I could never pull off those vocals! Let's keep it sacred.

DV: I would say most of NSF are "ballad sluts." Personally, I was working on a cover of "Night Songs" by Cinderella, but we're not necessarily hellbent on doing any covers at all. The Bathory cover came from our previous talks with a different record label who were pretty adamant

we record a bunch and when it came to signing with Peaceville, they really loved that cover in particular. You might hear NSF do an original ballad in the future though.

AU: People point out how hairy you guys are a lot. That's kind of a cool shtick. Are you going to '90s Bon Jovi and wax if you sell out?

NSF: Hell no! Real men don't shave their chests. I dress androgynously and wear makeup. I gotta balance it out! I mean, did Paul Stanley ever wax? I think not!

AU: The Decibel Tour: Mayhem, Mortii's, Imperial Triumphant. You guys might actually be considered less physically eccentric between IT's masks, Mortii's goblin prosthetics, and just Attila generally. What can we expect from NSF on this tour?

NSF: It's not dress-up for us. We do over-dramatize our look on stage compared to how we look off stage, but not by much. We prefer a more naturally theatrical image. I guess you can call it "street theatrical." Big hair, tight clothes, and a shit load of fog is all you really need. Eccentricity is not an image; it's a way of being. Expect some high-energy raw darkness. NSF is going to bring some rock n' roll to the tour, we are a more basic band in that we are not playing to a grid or even a metronome live, we get up there and the songs happen. Our records also have minimal metronome use too.

AU: One thing I like to ask is what's the grossest thing you've had to do on tour? Considering you've just done a few West Coast runs, I feel like this question is going to be way spicier after the Mayhem tour, so hopefully we can check back in with you after, but please let us know (it can be from a previous band as well I don't give a fuck).

BENEATH THE WHEEL

EF: I'm known for doing some gross things. My bandmates always comment on how I don't brush my teeth. But it's not the lack of teeth brushing that's disgusting, it's what I was doing the night before that adds to the unsavoury situation. I'll stick to vodka to wash the fungus down.

DV: Last year we headlined Centro de Salud in Mexico City. That was an unhinged affair that definitely burned a few weeks off of each of our lives. We return this March as well, so here's to some more weeks of life burned away.

AU: One time someone told you guys that you were too young to be in a good band and you got schooled about good music— at the Rainbow Bar and Grill, no less. Was this person Eddie Trunk? Did you feel they were right?

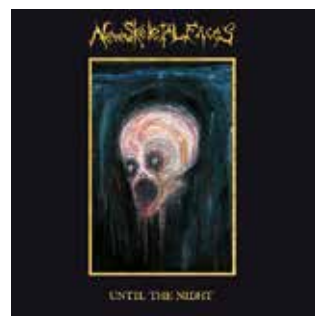
EF: Oh yeah, I got into a verbal altercation that almost turned physical. Some hippie-looking fuck was calling me "fag" and "poser," then talking shit about glam bands or whatever. Why was he even there? He then took off his shirt to expose his Amebix tattoo. I wasn't impressed.

DV: That happened as we were hanging out with our friends in Deathcharge. It wasn't Eddie Trunk, but I'm definitely no fan of his. Recently, I saw it was the anniversary of his show being cancelled, so I poured myself a drink in celebration. That said, I love a lot of the bands he would cover, especially KISS; I just couldn't stand him.

AU: How do we find you online and where do we pick up a copy of *Until the Night*?

NSF: Instagram is the best place to get updates from us. You can get it through Indiemerch and in Europe I believe you can get it directly through Peaceville or through Season of Mist, it's also in a lot of record stores if you look around.

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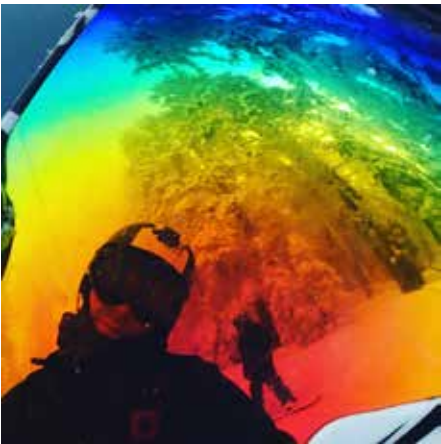




Mountain Collective American Tour: Storm Of The Century

By Brydo "Bring Chains" Parker

This is a six- or seven-part story that will take us on an adventure of epic proportions. Ira, the editor of this magazine and I rented an older 36 ft RV and bought a \$400 American ski pass called the Mountain Collective Pass that gives us each two days of skiing at 26 different resorts in Canada, the US, New Zealand, Australia, South America, and Europe. A little grade six math would tell you that is an insane deal: 26 resorts x 150 bucks a ticket average x two is a lot. So right after we committed, I coughed up my share and Ira used one of his credit cards to purchase the tickets. The date was Oct 15, 2015. Shortly after that, I tuned into a US weather station and the meteorologist showed a satellite photo that showed six or seven storm systems building up in the Pacific. He said the whole mountain system from BC to California and beyond was going to get a series of huge atmospheric rivers that was going to slam into a polar vortex from the arctic. That's all I needed to see, I turned off the TV and did not even look at another weather report. Ullr rewarded us with the storm of the century and



as our leaving date grew nearer, I was on edge. I was really working hard to not injure myself or get sick. We took possession of the big beast. We told the rental company that we were following the storm systems and asked if he had an unlimited mileage price? He said \$500 cash would do it. I

handed that over instantly. Best \$500 I ever spent, no counting miles and converting to km bullshit! The date was February 1st. We took the ferry from Sidney BC to Anacortes, Washington. Good ferry to get, as it is all reservations, and you have to show up at a certain time to get on due to the way they unload the boat when it makes a milk run of stops through the San Juan Islands. We arrived at the terminal, and I smelled a strange smell. We cleared customs and it was this first contact with agents that gave a foretelling on how this whole adventure was going to go. Breeze through customs. We had a great view out the front of the ship. The weather was rough, and waves were breaking over the bow of the ship, a good omen when you are hoping for a storm.

After clearing customs, we made our first stop at a cannabis store and bought up a great selection of grass and headed to see Ira's buddy Gravy who lives in Seattle. He took us to a grocery store that sold food close to out of date. What spectacular deals! I filled the freezer and fridge in the RV with meat and nearly got all the shopping done for the entire 21-day trip. We headed out to the first ski area, the mighty Crystal Mountain. This is a great mountain. Steep with a fresh 8 inches of powder dropped by the storm the night before. The lifts are top-notch, and it did not seem like it was packed. Very



little in the way of a line-up and when you pre-pay for a multi-mountain pass the sting of the ticket price is non-existent. The food was top notch ski cuisine. This is a very fast mountain due to its fall line. Most ski areas in the states are militant about ducking ropes and smoking on the hill. Not Crystal, they are super cool and have an excellent apres-ski scene. I really liked the roaring propane fire pit to sit around and quaff some after-ski beverages. After driving down the mountain, I could smell a strange smell again, so we stopped at a roadside garage where the mechanic informed us, I had left the emergency brake on, and the right rear brake was toast. Oh oh! So, he

disconnected that brake, and we continued on with only three brakes to keep this huge vehicle from disaster. Two days ripping Crystal was a great start, then we used Google maps that pointed us in the direction of Mt Bachelor in Oregon. We

POWDER SEEKERS



fought the storm the whole way. It was a Sunday when we passed the summit of Snoqualmie pass and there is a tiny resort there called The Summit at Snoqualmie, so we pulled in. We didn't have passes, but the price of a lift ticket was \$55, so we rode night passes then continued on our way. We got two mountains on the tally. Next issue we take on the big mountains of the Oregon Cascades and head to California.

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MURDER NUN

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most notorious for?

Justin Routbard, editor and writer/creator at Obscura Comics. Creator of Murder Nun.

AU: How did you first become interested in comic books and what made you decide to write your own comic?

I've been into comics and the like for as long as I can remember. Saturday morning cartoons and action figures were big for me as a kid and comics are a natural extension of that.

As for writing, I'd always

thought about it, but never figured it was something I could ever do. Most I had ever really written were lyrics for the various bands I've been in. I'd been helping out at Obscura with writing and development here and there when needed before coming on full time. A plot idea here, a joke there. Sun (Khamunaki) loved the idea for Murder Nun that I had sitting around and pushed me to write it and take it to Kickstarter.

AU: What were some of your inspirations?

For this project definitely Grindhouse and B-Movies. Dirty Harry, Charles Bronson and the like. I love the over the top violence and fun of films like Machete and The El Mariachi trilogy. The satanic panic movies of the 60s and 70s are always good. I come up with a lot of ideas driving and listening to music.

AU: Tell us all about your comic book project Murder Nun.

The story of Murder Nun follows a pious medieval nun betrayed by a group of influential priests. Sent to Hell by a lustful Cardinal, she strikes a deal with Lucifer himself and returns to what is now 1970's earth to take her revenge.

AU: What genre is the Murder Nun comic?

Grindhouse / Horror and Nunsplotation say it best.

AU: What's it like working with one of the hottest artists in the industry, Sun Khamunaki, who did one of the covers for Murder Nun #1?

It's Amazing! Sun is a super creative talent and full of ideas.

AU: Who does the art in Murder Nun and what do they bring to the table?

We've had Rafael Dantas on issues one and two. He's done an amazing job bringing my scripts to life.

AU: What company publishes Murder Nun and what other projects have they published?

Murder Nun is published by Obscura Comics. We're best known for Pumpkin as well as Becca Boo, the bimbo ghost ongoing series. We also publish the sci-fi fantasy, Ormus.

AU: Any special artists going to be involved doing covers for your next issue?

We have Sun Khamunaki, Pierluigi Abbodanza and Larry Tuason for starters. We also have Simon Bisley

working on a cover and hope it will be ready in time for #2.

AU: What's the best way for people to get their hands on copies of Murder Nun?

Head to www.obscuracomics.com ! Or keep an eye on our socials for Kickstarter dates.

AU: Any advice for someone trying to break into the comic book industry nowadays?

Work, A LOT. Constantly strive to be better, ride on the coattails of your incredibly talented girlfriend. HAHA

AU: What can we expect from the rest of the Murder Nun series?

Murder Nun will continue her quest to hunt down Cardinal Marinus in issue #2 coming out

in May. We're going to start going more into her experiences in Hell and the crisis of faith that led her to become a killer starting issue #3 and beyond. Our "big bad" Leviathan will be a constant source of friction as he and Lucifer fight

for control of Hell. We'll be introducing new characters Noxia and Sister Satan in upcoming issues.

AU: Any other story ideas you want to start working on?

Quite a few.

I'm writing a book about a wrestler murdered for not throwing a match and ending up in an undead fight club. Another about a mentally ill punk superhero-wannabe taking on a vampire mafia. Also a gods and monsters epic that will tie those and Murder Nun together. I've been putting ideas together for that one for a few years now.

We also have a 50-60s retro-future styled alien story we're handing off to a popular writer to flesh out.

AU: Are you possibly trying to get this story made into a movie?

We would love to! Murder Nun and Pumpkin would transfer particularly well I think. You reading this Tubi?

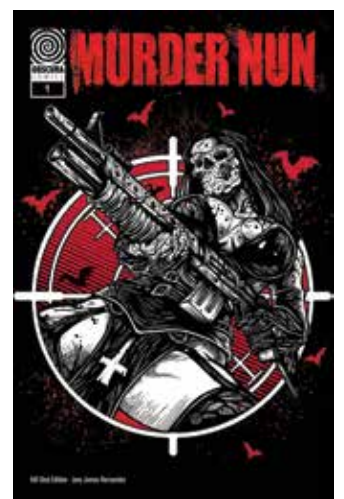
AU: Anything else to promote?

We have a great roster of new releases coming to Kickstarter this year. Becca Boo vs St. Patrick's Day, Murder Nun #2, Ormus #3, Becca Boo #4, Hail Mary #1 (a new gothic Vampire horror) and our slasher title Pumpkin #5. You can catch up with back issues or digital copies on our website.

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CANNABIS CORNER



Capital City Cannabis Co.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Cory Murphy: I'm Cory Murphy from Capital City Cannabis Co. I'm best known for holding my breath for a really long time (it's from working in legal cannabis—joking, I'm a free diver when not in the grow room).

AU: When did you first start growing cannabis?

CM: I started growing outdoors in the early days, easily 15 years ago.

AU: What first drew you to the cannabis industry?

CM: The plant, the people, the lifestyle. Weed has always been a part of the West Coast culture; it was a natural fit from the beginning.

AU: What strains do you currently produce and what makes them unique?

CM: Lemon Bang Bang, West Coast OG, OMFG, and Jelly Breath. Superb flavours, great highs, and the strains are wildly different.

AU: Do you prefer sativas or indicas?

CM: I look for specific terpene profiles or cultivars that work well for me.

AU: What is your all-time favourite strain to smoke?

CM: Romulan or Space Queen... old-school Island classics are my fave.

AU: What's it like being a licensed producer in BC?

CM: The culture is amazing, the lifestyle is great - though there are many challenges in the industry. The province needs to do better at supporting the local cannabis producers.

AU: Why is it important to support local growers?

CM: Local support keeps us in business, without local support it makes everything extra challenging and we have enough challenges in this industry already. Support your local grower, support your local business!

AU: What makes an expert grower in your opinion?

CM: Experience, attention to detail, and high-quality standards.

AU: What are some growing secrets or tips you can share with our readers?

CM: Excellent genetics are key! Put in the work, and you will get

the results.

AU: What are all of your sub brands and what is the difference between them?

CM: As a pure cultivation outfit, we run all our products with BC Weed Co. They do a phenomenal job with the brand, and our ethos is fully aligned. You can find our unique offerings in the BC Weed Co cans or bags, and the pre-rolls are great if you're on the go!

AU: Where are your products available?

CM: They always carry our flower at Evergreen

Cannabis in Kitsilano, you can order for delivery anywhere in BC from ecsvan.ca



strains and profiles so that people can find one that works best for them.

AU: What's the best part of your job?

CM: Working with a great team, doing something we love to do, seeing the flowers finished at the end of the flower cycle, and hearing from satisfied customers. We like happy tokers.

AU: What are some cannabis secrets or tips you can share with our readers?

CM: We are all different and so is the weed, find the right cannabis profile that works for you. We work hard to have many different



AU: How else can this amazing plant be used to save the planet?

CM: This special plant can stimulate creativity and spread kindness. Be creative, be kind. The world needs it now more than ever.

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Paddy Waggin'

It's that time of the year again and we are coming up fast on Saint Patrick's Day and we had a chance to talk with the lead singer/songwriter, Aidan Carroll AKA "Paddy" from East Van's very own Celtic punk band Paddy Waggin'.

Absolute Underground: So, what's the craic, Paddy?

Paddy: Everything is great and as usual this time of year, we are busy rehearsing and preparing for our annual Paddy's Day party.

AU: For our readers that may not have heard of Paddy Waggin', give us a quick description.

Paddy: Paddy Waggin' is a Celtic punk rock band that plays traditional, originals, covers, rebel, and drinking songs. We are a six-piece and we have a few players that play multiple instruments, so you can expect to hear: acoustic guitar, bass, banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, accordion, bodhrán, harmonica, drums, and of course the PW lads singing their hearts out.

AU: Are you playing Lana Lou's again this year? What's in store for the lucky folks that will be at the show?

Paddy: Yes, we are playing at Lana's this year on Friday, March 14th. It's turned into a fun tradition for us to play at Lana Lou's Rock n' Roll Eatery. This will be our fifth year now and

it's an absolute pleasure to have a recurring event to look forward to.

AU: What's your set going to look like?

Paddy: We will be playing two sets with all our original Paddy Waggin' tunes and we will also do covers from the greats in the genre like Flogging Molly, The Dropkick Murphys, The Mahones. Trad tunes and songs from The Dubliners, Christy Moore, and of course the legendary Pogues.

AU: Who's opening?

Paddy: Well, after her fantastic performance last year, we decided to have the amazing Sinead X Sanders to open the

evening for us again. If you haven't heard of her you need to go check her out.

AU: Anything else new with the band?

Paddy: This year, we are using a new ticket service called Simpli events for the show and looking into merch options. In our spare time, we have been working on our new songs, a video, and are planning to record a new album. We are back to playing as a six-piece again and searching for a new fiddle player and a new lead acoustic guitar player for when Andrew moves away. Anyone interested can contact us via email.

AU: Any other shows planned?

Paddy: We decided to just do one show this year and enjoy the night off on the 17th. Every year gets better and it's a real pleasure to see everyone dancing and singing along and having fun. Hope to see you there!

paddywaggin.ca

IG: @paddywagginband

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Love Hurts

By Vince D'Amato

Love is one of the very small handful of actual plot motivators in any type of fiction, no matter the genre – Love, Money, Power, Lust, and Revenge... With this Valentine's issue of Absolute Underground, I immediately thought about some love-themed horror. Horror fiction can provide extremely fertile ground for cultivating some pretty warped stories that spring and twist from love and romance. Within the horror genre, love can grow and warp and morph into obsession, anguish, paranoia, misguided resurrections, general insanity, and obviously, pain– both inside and out. I have to admit that one of my absolute guilty pleasures is Bob Balaban's 1992 comedy *My Boyfriend's Back*, about a recently dead high schooler who just doesn't want to leave his prom date hanging. This is sort of a reverse-*Monkey's Paw* scenario, a theme that's been explored and twisted many a time in the name of love and horror. Obviously not everything in this sub-genre is going to be included here (that list itself would be insane), the goal is not a definitive list, it's just me sharing a few of my absolute favourite romantically violent misfortunes, where love certainly does hurt.

Frankenhooker (1990)



I guess we'll start off with a bang here, from the director of *Brain Damage* and *Basket Case*. As I'm writing this, I'm realizing that weirdly, all of Frank Henenlotter's films are actually about love of some kind, but this one has to be his masterpiece.

After a New Jersey medical student's fiancé is killed (and shredded) by a runaway motorized lawnmower, and having saved her head, he goes about trying to put the rest of her back together using parts taken from various hookers across the bridge in New York. As nutty as the premise is, this is one of the most thoughtful, insightful, ahead-of-its-time, and hilarious social satires I've ever seen, and for several years it even held the top spot in my favourite films of all time.

The Fan (Der Fan, 1982)



This one is obsession all the way; and a seriously underrated melodramatic horror movie that was thankfully reissued by Mondo Macabro. As explored and exploited in this film, obsession can come from a misplaced idea of love– which is the concept here, as a young fan, overwhelmingly infatuated with a famous and extremely popular singer, turns to utterly extreme measures of violence and vengeance when she perceives that she's been slighted by him.

The Duke of Burgundy (2014)

British
genre
director
Peter
Strickland's
follow-up
to *Berberian
Sound
Studio*



maintains a stylistic influence of 1970s Italian genre films, as well as that decade's experimental female-forward films like *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* and *Vampyros Lesbos*. Not exactly a

horror movie, yet within the first few minutes of *The Duke of Burgundy* you know there's just something a little off-kilter about the two leading women's domestic relationship. This is more a film of meditation and the fantastique, with sexually obsessive elements battling over the mundaneness of long love and partnership, and something of a slightly insidious power struggle blooming within the dominant/subordinate relationship. The film is all build-up with no overtly visual spectacle to resolve the conflict (much like *Berberian Sound Studio*), but it undeniably sticks with you as a deep and methodical exploration of sex and domestic relationships. Highly, highly recommended.

Cemetery Man (Dellamorte Dellamore, 1994)



Italian gialli director Michele Soavi's absolute masterpiece stars Rupert Everett and is based on the Italian horror-comic *Dylan Dog* (whose lead character was ironically modelled off of Rupert Everett years earlier– weird). Veering from the origins of the comic character, Everett plays the groundskeeper of a cemetery whose occupants continuously come back to life as flesh-eating zombies. He falls madly in love with a young woman who he thinks has been killed by one of the undead, and then he really kills her when he thinks she's come back as a zombie, and then she really does come back... and this is merely the set-up for this crazy Italian horror flick. From here, Everett's character Francesco Dellamorte obsessively falls for more than one of the young woman's doppelgangers, while the constant cemetery resurrections begin to drive him insane and force him to take extreme measures to keep the dead from rising. To me, this is one of the best horror movies ever filmed, even though it does go wildly off-course from the original comics, it ends up taking on a striking and vivid life of its own.

Pet Semetary (1989)



Remade in 2019, the newer version just didn't have the emotional impact that the first film did, likely due to the new screenwriters trying to twist up Stephen King's story so that it wasn't completely a scene-for-scene remake. But King's original, which was also scripted by him, is one of his closed adaptations to the original novel, and probably also the best screenplay King himself has ever written. This one isn't just about the love of two partners, this is the love between four family members, and it's a tragic and horrifying expansion on *The Monkey's Paw*, which begins

ABSOLUTE HORROR

with the death and resurrection of the family pet cat. The movie focuses squarely on emotion and grief, but the novel... that's a bit of a different beast. In spite of the meticulous similarities between the movie and the novel, the novel is clearly a meditation on festering addiction and its effect on the family patriarch's heart and soul; which most fans now know in hindsight, is something that King was going through personally at the time the novel was written. Both the book and the film are chilling, despite the latter's inclusion of some brief humorous moments offered to relieve some of the tension, and I'm jealous of anyone's first time seeing the film or reading the book.

Bride of Re-Animator (1990)



Directed by Brian Yuzna, this is almost as good as the original, and it was probably the best sequel that could've come from Stuart Gordon's brilliant original. This sequel leans on the obsession of former medical student Dan Cain who can't let his dead fiancé Meg go– despite his new relationship with Italian girlfriend, journalist Francesca Danelli. It's complicated, I guess. Dan and his close colleague, the infamous Dr. Herbert West, in response to West's own obsession and questionable sanity, steal Meg's heart from the morgue and keep it on ice until they can put together enough dead body parts to recreate a woman who will eventually house Meg's heart, bringing her back to life using Herbert West's iconic phosphorus green re-agent.

Audition (1999)



Still my favourite Takashi Miike film, I get more out of it each time I see it. Centered around a widower who takes the questionable advice of a business friend and sets up 'auditions' for a non-existent film project so that he can instead vet possible romantic prospects. He falls hard for the younger Asami and they begin a relationship which quickly spirals into the frighteningly bizarre; unbeknownst to the widower, Asami is harbouring some dark and murderous secrets and obsessions that lead the doomed pair into some of the most intense horror-movie moments ever filmed, putting director Takashi Miike on the map.

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A Tribute to David Lynch

By Vince D'Amato

One of my favourite David Lynch stories came from the set of *Inland Empire*, where during filming, an assistant producer was told to go and wrangle a one-legged woman, a monkey and a lumberjack. "Is he serious?" the producer asked to Laura Dern, who said, "Hey, man, it's a David Lynch movie." David Lynch died on January 15th - we heard this from a friend's text on the 16th - by the 17th, it was the top news story on Wikipedia... or at least on my algorithm it was. That article painted him as a hugely important and influential filmmaker, and I couldn't agree



more. The list of genres that he crossed through each of his films, and as well throughout his amazing creative career, was a tad bonkers, and indeed, he's been one of my favourite filmmakers for decades, after having been introduced to his work via a VHS tape of *Blue Velvet* that was running during a day-party

that I'd been drinking at (this was back in my late teens). My first reaction had been, "What the fuck is this?" Later, some friends that were far hipper than me turned me on to *Wild at Heart*. I took it from there, continuing with *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* and building an inspired obsession with his work. It was his latter films that really struck a chord with me, *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, those two films had significantly informed the last three Darkside Releasing "neo-giallo" (or *Brivido Giallo*) productions; I would always make sure that our cast and crew



had at least experienced *Mulholland Drive* before we'd proceeded with those final productions (2011-2016). I think from *Twin Peaks* to *Mulholland Drive* the murder-mystery genre had never reach such existential heights as it did through the lens of

Lynch's surrealism and his creative surrealist sensibilities. His films are, quite simply, something else. He was 71 when he directed all 18 hours of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017), the first two episodes receiving a standing ovation at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. Even though he's one of my top-five all-time favourite directors, oddly, I still haven't seen his first three films (*Eraserhead*, *The Elephant Man*, *Dune*). I have a friend who has only seen those early films, and none of the post-*Blue Velvet* ones. Perhaps, in tribute to David Lynch, it's time to rectify that.

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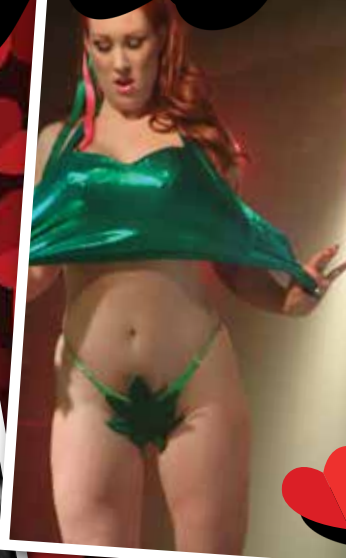
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A man with a full beard and mustache, wearing a black t-shirt with a large, stylized skull graphic. The skull has large, expressive eyes and a wide, toothy grin. The man has tattoos on both arms and is standing against a plain, light-colored background.

direct influence on the art I'm making now. The full album flash sheets were meant to pay tribute to albums considered perfect from start to finish. The entire album, the way they were appreciated prior to streaming.

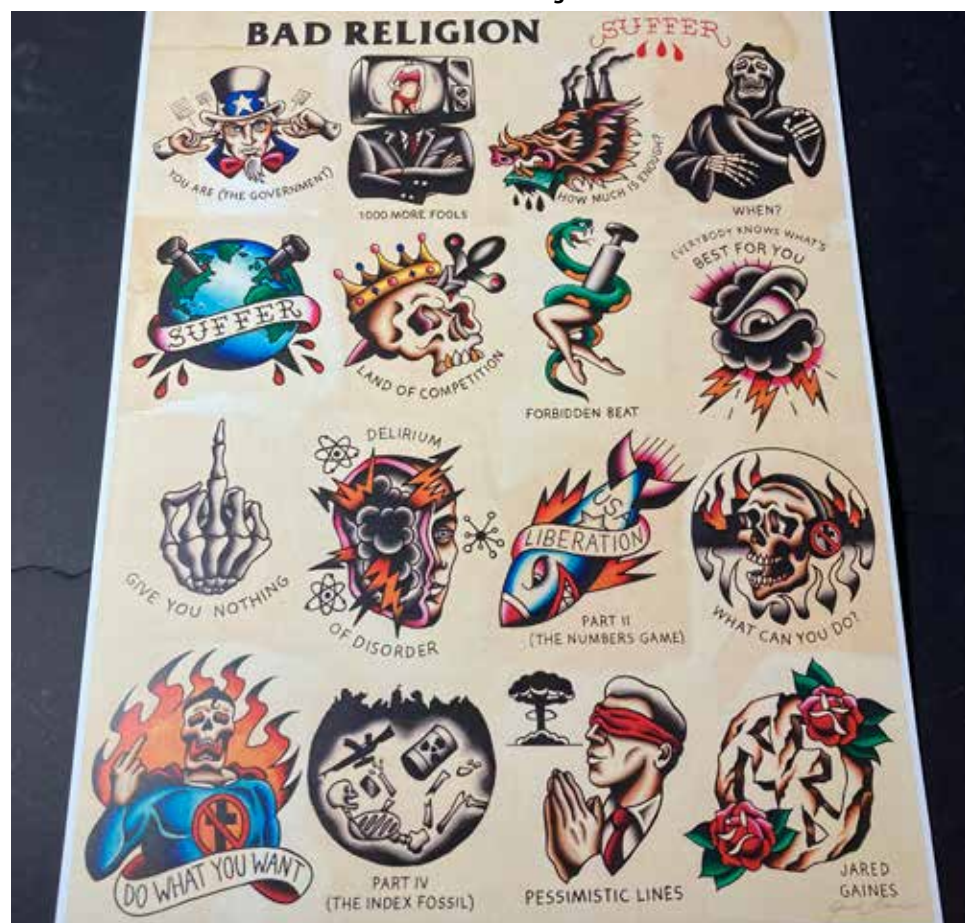
AU: Do you take commissions? What's the strangest thing you've ever been asked to draw?

JG: Yes, I do all kinds of commissions from obscure songs to comic characters. A recent strange one - Foghorn Leghorn coming out of a sewer, holding a Budweiser.

JG: Online, almost daily! There must be hundreds



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Smash TV

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Shaun Rathy:

You are talking to Shaun Rathy, vocalist of Smash TV which also includes Nic Bennet (guitar), Mickey Prince (bass) and Eric Bishop (drums). We've become infamous for outlandish live shows, bizarre songs, tie dances, hot pool boys, and jump kicks.

AU: Give us a brief history of Smash TV.

SR: I started Smash TV as a solo project in 2020 which then became a full band in 2022 with Mickey (who credits himself with saving the band from being considered pop punk), Terry on drums, and Tron on guitar, originally practicing in an old chicken coop. Terry and Tron left in 2024 and Nic and Eric replaced them on guitar and drums, respectively. Smash TV is all about making the weirdest music possible while still remaining in the punk universe and putting on the wildest live shows you have ever seen.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

SR: We are from Vancouver Island's Nanaimo; the scene here is kinda blowing up lately! We

have so many talented bands from all walks of life and genres, including acts such as Danger Box and Caveman and the Banshee. Lots of friends and music lovers always come out to show support.

AU: Describe Smash TV's sound if possible.

SR: If I had to categorize our sound I would say we are Post Punk, which some are calling Crank Wave these days. Although I would have to say we are a bit more hardcore and heavier than most Post Punk. Nic has really added a technical guitar element to the sound which is less common in the genre.

AU: How do you approach writing music? Who or what are your strongest influences?

SR: Our approach is primarily to improvise. Mickey or Nic might bring in a riff, Eric lays down a beat and then we just jam it out and build the rest on the fly. Every song is a collaborative effort! I have a rule of never pre-writing any of my lyrics and improvise them all on them on the spot, which are only later written down.

Sometimes we like to add a part in the song that doesn't belong with the rest of the music; we like to do dumb stuff like that, haha. We have literally thousands of influences, but currently

our main ones are Idles, Viagra Boys, Butthole Surfers, Dead Kennedys, and System Of A Down.

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

SR: Over the next couple of months we will be releasing four songs that we recorded with local super genius Derek Mattin and we couldn't be happier with them. It's the best music we have ever made as a band. Expect some of the best and most interesting post punk to come out of Canada this year!

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

SR: The album will be exploring themes of dystopia, family issues, substance abuse, and mental and physical illness. Some of which coming from lived experience and some being storytelling for the sake of discussing things we find important or just weird and funny.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

SR: "Cancer Scare" is the one song to look out for, especially if you're a big fan of Idles. It's dark and gritty with a punk-driven beat. Immediately

in the early stages of recording, we were all blown away and being able to make it in a good studio environment gave us the freedom to try weird things we otherwise wouldn't have considered.

AU: Any upcoming

shows or tours?

SR: We have a big show coming up March 22nd with giants Opal In Sky at The Rainbow Room in Port Alberni. We'll also have our annual one day festival at The Globe Live Studio in Nanaimo June 27th, which kicks off our BC and Albertan tour that will last through to mid-July. In 2026, we have an Australian tour in our sights.

AU: Anything else to promote?

SR: We [just released] a music video for our previously released song, "Tom Waves". It's totally ridiculous and stupid, check it out on YouTube. I'd also like to promote our merch—buy our stuff, impress your parents!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

SR: Always be yourself. Go outside and be social. Test your drugs if you're into that kinda thing.

You can stream Smash TV on Spotify.

beacons.ai/smashtv



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Jackknife Brewing

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are your skills to pay the bills?

Brad Tomlinson: Brad Tomlinson here, founder and beer wizard of Jackknife Brewing in Kelowna.

AU: How long have you been involved in the world of beer?

BT: I've been summoning suds in my home valley since 2016, helping the folks at Kettle River brewing start up before moving into my own shop next door in 2019. Introducing the world to our "weird beer



and classic pizza."

AU: How did Jackknife Brewing get its start?

BT: Pizza wizard Damien Moore, my friend Ian Middleton, and I opened Jackknife in the spring of 2020. Yeah, that spring, perfect timing. I wanted to build a brewery with a focus on my love for Norwegian brewing and metal gigs, luckily enough, these two jumped on board and we've been sending it ever since.

AU: What are some types of beer you brew?

BT: I brew beers with Northern European farmhouse yeasts, mainly ones called kveik from Norway, and combine these hundreds-of-years-old yeasts with Pacific Northwest flavours and ingredients. I'm trying my damndest to highlight the terroir of the Okanagan valley in my beers here, making beer with juniper boughs, spruce tips, all kinds of berries and local fruit, with the majority being hand-foraged by us.

AU: What sets Jackknife apart?

BT: We're a bunch of misfits in a sea of regular-ass beer and uninspired spaces. The dungeon is a multi-purpose space with low ceilings, long tables, and a hidden patio in the back. When we're not in pizza and beer mode, the space turns into a venue, hosting metal/punk/hardcore shows. We grew up

going to dank basement gigs and we wanted that to live in our space, giving back to the community that we hold close.

AU: Any unique brewing secrets you can share?

BT: It's not a secret but it's something that not a lot of people get. Brew

good beer, if it sucks, dump that shit.

AU: Where is your brewery located? Can people stop by to sample your beer?

BT: Our dungeon is in the North End of Kelowna.

AU: Where can Jackknife currently be found on tap?

BT: We only sell our beer at our shop. We've built a brewery that is all about the experience. From the basement bar vibes, the ripper 'zza, the gigs, to our amazing staff, it's definitely worth the drive. Come hang!

AU: Do you plan to attend any events coming up?

BT: We're cutting our events down to just one a year now, Farmhouse Fest in Vancouver. It's my favourite event to attend and pour at. It's set up at the UBC farm, and you're surrounded by an apple orchard. There are beers pouring from all over the world, it's sick.

AU: Will you be doing anything special for Valentine's Day?

BT: I'll be down in California brewing a beer with my friends at June Lake Brewing, one of five stops



BREWING 101



on a three-week long collab tour down the West Coast!

AU: What do you like best about brewing beer?

BT: The beer community is rad and ever-expanding. You can roll into a brewery almost anywhere and instantly connect with other brewers. We've made friends in Spain, Norway, Hawaii, and even Japan just to name a few spots. These connections help us make better beer and collaborate across borders and mindsets, I fuckin' love it.

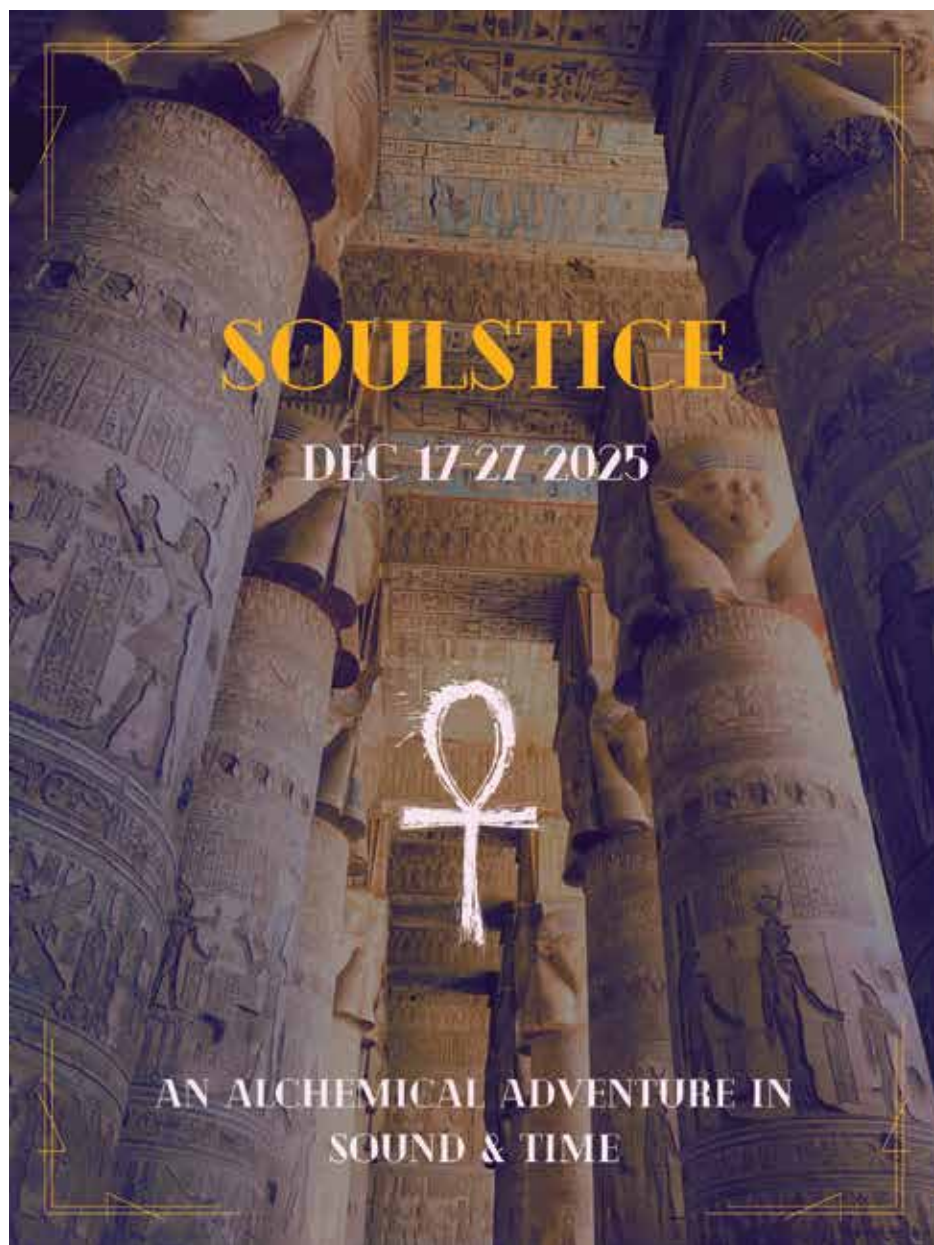
AU: Anything else you'd like to share?

BT: If you want to follow the journey, scope our website and Instagram to find out more about the shop, with show dates, our fundraising campaigns, and so much more.

www.jackknife.beer

IG: @jackknifebrewing





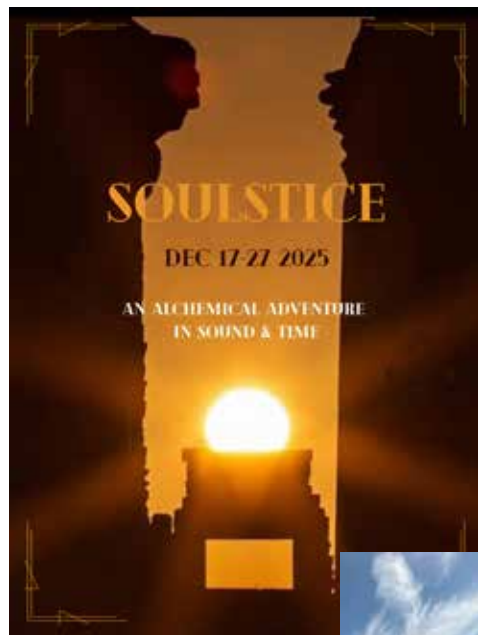
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SOULstice Alchemical- Retreats

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are we here to talk about?

Ashley Lett: My name is Ashley Lett, I'm a world-travelling iconoclast and we are here today to talk about EPIC ADVENTURES and why you should come on my next one.

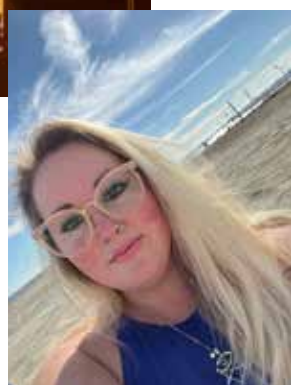
AU: What was the inspiration behind starting Alchemical Retreats?

AL: I don't know if it was my love of *Indiana Jones* or growing up in the middle of nowhere, but my whole life I dreamed of jungles, pyramids, temples, and seeing the world. After covid shut it all down, I thought I better get out there while I could. Since then, I've been travelling the world, going on epic retreats, meeting amazing people,

and completely transforming my world. Everyone always asks how I live this life and tells me that they wish they could come too, so I decided to make that a reality. That led to the birth of Alchemical-Retreats. We curate transformational retreats and creative experiences guiding individuals to unlock their potential and live a reality beyond their wildest dreams.

AU: What is your latest endeavour, SOULstice: An Alchemical Adventure In Sound & Time all about?

AL: SOULstice, is my baby, I've been creating this sacred Egyptian sound alchemy journey for two years, curating every single detail of this offering to perfection. Here's a taste:



In 11 days and 10 luxurious nights, you will journey through the heart of ancient Egypt, guided by its wisdom, beauty, and the transformative power of sound.

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illumination.

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a sacred ceremony that harmonizes the journey's wisdom and prepares you to step forward renewed.

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This journey is for the ones who defy convention, who sense there's something greater waiting for them. It's for the storytellers, songwriters, music makers, and change bringers. It's for those who yearn to break free from the ordinary and step into a world where creativity flows, voices are activated, and dreams become reality.

AU: How can people embark on this once-in-a-lifetime adventure with you?

AL: Take the first step—this journey is calling those who seek renewal, creative inspiration, and deep connection to ancient wisdom. If you feel the pull, trust it. Secure your spot today and step into an unforgettable adventure. Spaces are limited: This experience is capped at 20 participants to ensure intimacy and depth. Payment plans are available with flexible options tailored to your needs.

AU: What spiritual aspects will this trip delve into?

AL: While Egypt is a deeply magical place, Spiritual aspects are unique to every individual. SOULstice is more than a retreat. It's a curated path of self-discovery, a keystone moment designed to alchemize your inner creator. Through sound, inspiration, and adventure, you'll experience a profound awakening of your creative self.

AU: When does this quest take place and how



can travellers prepare to be a part of it?

AL: Our quest begins in Egypt, December 17-27, 2025 – Cairo, Luxor, The Nile, Aswan.

All you need to prepare is to make sure your passport is valid through June 2026 and reach out to start your payment plan. Then literally every single aspect of this luxury all-inclusive journey is done for you. We even have a team of travel agents working to book your flights to Egypt for you.

AU: With the group being there for Dec 21st, is there a solar alignment on Solstice with the pyramids?

AL: All evidence suggests that the Egyptians had a deep understanding of celestial movements, and such understanding is reflected within their architectural designs and temple structures. Winter Solstice is marked by unique solar alignments, particularly at Karnak Temple, where the sunrise aligns with the temple's axis. It is here that we will experience the illuminating of the shrine to Amun-Ra in a ceremony of Ra's journey through the underworld at night, symbolizing death and rebirth, paralleling the idea of the sun's "rebirth" after the Solstice.



For bookings and inquiries, email soulstice2025@gmail.com
alchemical-retreats.com

Ramone Carlton

By Mike “Over the Top Rope” Croy

Welcome to another exciting edition of Turnbuckle Sandwich! This time around I had the distinct pleasure of catching up with Ramone Carlton. What follows is our sweetheart of a conversation about professional wrestling!

Absolute Underground: How did you get involved with pro wrestling?

Ramone Carlton: Ramone has been a fan of pro wrestling since I was a young kid back in the early '80s. So, my love of wrestling started early. Fast-forward to summer 2021 and we were at a 365 Pro wrestling show, my wife and me. After the show, I approached the owner of the promotion and I asked about doing some video, she asked about becoming a wrestler. We had been fans of the promotion for quite a few years, so neither request was that far out there.

AU: You wear many hats in 365 pro wrestling, can you tell us about what you do?

RC: Yes, there are a fair share of hats. Currently, Ramone Carlton is the manager of the Lord's Warrior, Lak Siddartha. Ramone is also one of the commentators for 365 Combat, although that is a role that I am about to pass the torch on, so to speak. At the live shows, it seems Ramone has fallen into the role of problem-solver at the events; fancy jacket or not, if a fan or talent or crew approach Ramone with a question about production and things like sound, video, chair placement, lights, where to find a mop, or there's an angry lady at the door complaining about fans parking in front of her house. Ramone is there to make sure it's all running smoothly!

Also, back in June Ramone joined the Pro Wrestling Academy in Victoria as a full-time wrestling student. Since then, I have had the opportunity to work a few matches with Eddie Osborne and Thelonious Jovinius Harlequin.

Lord's Warrior Lak Siddartha?

RC: Ramone fell into Thelonious Jovinius Harlequin's 5th dimension portal box while looking for the missing crew members who had fallen into the box. In hindsight, Ramone admits that he perhaps should have had Sawyer Stein look instead. Anyways, when I fell in, some things happened, but long story short, I found a coin, and it apparently gives Ramone full control, most of the time anyways, of the creature known as the The Lord's Warrior Lak Siddartha.

AU: What makes for a good wrestling show?



RC: Story, plain and simple. Make me care, make the fans care. It's the old soap opera bit; make them tune in next week. You can change to any variety show and see the same thing, so make yourself a must see. Make the fans want to know what's going to happen next.

Will they turn on each other? Will they still be friends? Can they be? What happened to all those mittens? Will they get their title shot or be denied

AU: If you could invite anyone for dinner, who would you invite and why?

RC: Sticking with the wrestling theme, I am going to say Mick Foley, but each course it's a different version of Mick. Don't tell me which is coming up next, just surprise me.

AU: Who inspires you the most?

RC: This is always a loaded question, say the wrong name and someone is like "hey what about me?" And that rings true for me because,

TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH

RC: Wow, this is a hard one for Ramone. Well, this may not be the funniest, but recently I was at a Boom show where Artemis Spencer was tagging with Nicole Matthews against Shaolin Funk and Randy Myers. Throughout the whole match, Funk and Myers are trying to get Spencer to dance with them but Matthews won't let it happen. She wants to wrestle, they want to dance, mayhem ensues and by the end, Matthews lures Funk and Myers into dancing with her so Spencer can get the roll up. Now this may not sound funny on paper, but if you have seen Matthews wrestle you know she's all business all the time, so yeah, it was quite humorous.

AU: What can we expect from Ramone Carlton in 2025?

RC: Many things, but what Ramone will say is this, expect the unexpected, Ramone is working on a few things that will see him closer to ringside more often.

AU: Who has been your trainer in wrestling?

RC: Eddie Osbourne at the Pro Wrestling Academy in Victoria BC.

AU: As we wrap things up here, is there anything else you would like our readers to know?

RC: Yes! Check us out! Check Ramone Carlton out! We have over 110 episodes or so of 365 Combat! Almost 40 of its sister show Island Main Event Tuesday, and nearing 30 of our talk show Karen About Wrestling! All of them are on the 365 Pro wrestling YouTube channel. Of course, come checkout our live shows or those of any local independent wrestling promotion! Don't just watch wrestling, experience it!

365prowrestling.com

Photo by Darren Ho Media

especially with my injury and a host of other challenges, different people inspire me the most. But if I have to pick one, I'm going to say my wife Becky Beech, if you know the challenges that she has overcome in her life, you would completely understand. I think she talked about a few of them when you interviewed her, but for those that know, they know. So yes Becky!

AU: What's the funniest thing you've seen

Anna's



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Ava Lawless

Absolute Underground: With a name like Ava Lawless, one of your t-shirts is inspired by the *Return of the Living Dead*, and your promo videos feature pins and patches of WASP and Exciter on your leather jacket. How would you describe yourself in the world of wrestling?

Ava Lawless: Ava Lawless is who I've always been, just turned up a notch. In high school, I was in bands and always at shows. Wrestling gives me a way to channel that same energy— loud, unapologetic, and a little chaotic.

AU: How many titles do you currently own and what wrestling organizations do you compete

in?

AL: I currently hold two championships, my recent addition being the Winnipeg Pro Wrestling's Women's Championship— which has been held by some formidable women's wrestlers. I wrestled Allie Katch in front of 1300+ people for that championship, and the energy was infectious. In Alberta, I frequently work Top Talent and Dungeon Wrestling which bring together some of the best talent and the most passionate crowds.

AU: How do the different organizations effect the direction of your character?

AL: They don't— depends on the mood I'm in that day.

AU: What determines if you wrestle against men or women or sometimes both?

AL: The booker. The truth is, we need more women's wrestlers - because I'd wrestle any woman, anywhere!

AU: You were in the feature film *Dark Match*. How was your experience on a film set acting as a wrestler compared to the day to day life of a wrestler?

AL: My time in *Dark Match* was brief, but it was a great experience. One of the coolest aspects was getting to help the actors with some of the stunts for their wrestling matches. The biggest difference as a wrestler compared to acting as one on the silver screen... is you'd never catch me wearing pink spandex in real life, haha.

AU: What are your future goals and where can we expect to see Ava Lawless in 2025?

AL: Everywhere and anywhere! My goals are to be



booked and busy— and maybe catch a few bands along the way.

Ava takes on AEW's Deonna Purrazzo on March 7th at the Palace Theater in Calgary.

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SPIT OF THE SIN

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Sasha: Sasha Sarty from Spit of the Sin. I am most infamous for my catchy songs and loud harsh vocals. The band also may be known for playing cartoon metal band covers at shows ("F*ck the Shit" by Sons of Butcher and "Into the Water" by Dethklok).

AU: Give us a brief history of Spit of the Sin.

Sasha: I have played music and written songs for a long time, but it took until 2016 to get a line-up together and form a band. It is just me in the band at the moment, and there have been different line-ups over the years. I love '70s rock/metal, I love melodic blackened death metal. I was raised on punk, grunge, and '80s music. Spit of the Sin fits somewhere in there. The band is all about history, science, stories, and frustrations.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

Sasha: Calgary, Alberta! The music scene is good and active here. We are connected with our other towns and cities in the province which is fantastic! We love playing with bands from out of town. For bands: Vern's is a right of passage, a place where all must play. Also, you've got to go check out the Loud as Hell Metal Festival in Drumheller at least once!

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Sasha: Groovy and heavy Songs. The band has been a power trio so there is that bare bones '70s band sound where less is more. The sound is still full though because we love the smashing kits,

having the bass cranked, and I have a loud voice.

AU: How do you approach writing music? Who or what are your strongest influences?

Sasha: I approach writing music in a few different ways. Sometimes I write the lyrics first and add a melody, or the other way around. I have also had bandmates give topics to write about that help inspire me and that has been fun! (Check out "Gargoyles" and "Agincourt"). I've written about historical events. I also like to write songs as stories and even some are just songs to get my frustrations and anger out! As for strongest influences when it comes to writing, I'm not sure. The lyrics are maybe the last thing that

I pay attention to, but I'd say like Iron Maiden, Van Halen, Mastodon, and Acid Bath when it comes lyrically. They have some cool songs. The band's requirements were: must love Dethklok, Lamb of God, and Pantera- but not everyone did. I love almost all genres of metal. Of course, Black Sabbath, Ozzy Osbourne, Megadeth, Metallica, etc. I feel like we all love those guys, but I definitely also like Black Dahlia Murder, Carcass, Gwar, Biohazard, Death, Baroness. There are so many amazing and unique bands out there. I don't like picking favourites and I could be here all day naming all the bands that have made a difference in my life and musical tastes!

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

Sasha: Spit of the Sin has a brand-new album called *Parasite* and it will be released on February 10th! It is a concept album that came together so well! It's five tracks. We got rock, a couple songs with more of a death metal edge, or a punk edge, or a prog metal sound to it.

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

Sasha: I was just having fun with this album. They are all songs about parasites, viruses, or infections! "The Great Mortality" is about the black death which I've been wanting to write a song about for years. "Mandible Stain" is about dental pain from infections and surgeries. "Amoeba" is about brain-eating bacteria. There is a song called "Parasite" on the album, and the last track "Oleander" is about a poisonous flower and a story that I read about where someone bragged about murdering another with the plant and that was how they got caught.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

Sasha: I could listen to "Oleander" on repeat, so please listen to that one! Or tell me how bad my

death metal song "Amoeba" is, haha.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Sasha: We will be getting more merch!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Sasha: Thank you for reading and if you write music and want to play on that stage, just go out there and do it!

You can find Spit of the Sin on Apple Music and Spotify.

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Space Station Rehearsals Monthly Spaces in Toronto, ON

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are you best known for?

Jesse: My name's Jesse. I'm probably best known for being in the band MIT City back in the early '00s, but currently I am the owner of Space Station Rehearsals.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Space Station Rehearsals?

Jesse: Back in 2021, I used to manage a furniture store in downtown Toronto. Coming out of all the lockdown shenanigans, my location was closed, and I was handed my severance. At the same time, Rehearsal Factory was slowly selling off their assets and shutting down for good. Their Front St location had closed earlier that year, followed by Richmond St in the fall, and finally Geary St the following spring. So, I took my severance, all my EI, and another \$20k in loans from family and friends to open the studio.



AU: Where are you located?

Jesse: I'm right around the corner from the old Geary St Rehearsal Factory location on the corner of Dufferin St and Brandon Ave.

AU: Are you in any bands yourself?

Jesse: Yes, I front the band Starship Experience. I say 'front' but there's just the two of us.

AU: What makes your rehearsal space unique?

Jesse: Once I was finished with the first wave of construction, I noticed my hallways were looking a little beige and boring, so I decided

to turn them into a local art gallery. I currently feature art from about 15-20 local Ontario artists. Some of it has been donated, but I try to pay for the art when I can. I even had a piece specifically commissioned by Lora Kellogg from the band Second Wife.

I also make a point of only offering monthly rehearsal space. Most available space in Toronto is hourly rentals, which I attribute to having a better profit margin and the city being so unaffordable for new businesses to get started.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

Jesse: Art before profit.

AU: How big is the space there? How many rooms?

Jesse: Studio is roughly 3200sqft. Currently I have ten rooms: seven large rooms and three drum rooms.

AU: Any plans to expand in the near future?

Jesse: Construction starts March 3rd on an additional unit in the same building that's roughly

2400sqft. Seven more rooms are planned: five large rooms and two drums rooms.

AU: What are the booking slots like and what does it cost?

Jesse: As I only offer monthly rental; booking is typically calling or emailing me directly. We work out a one-year lease and I try to get you moved in as soon as possible. Shared room rates start at \$300/month. Full room rates start at \$1800/month. All my prices include the HST.

AU: What bands are currently rehearsing there?

Jesse: I have a few famous bands currently, but I don't know if they want me to kiss and tell. Instead, I'll just mention a short list of local talent that I've enjoyed listening to and watching live: Blissfields, Cola Heads, Black Budget, Abraxas Reflux, Alonekitty, Bloody Blue Darlings, SAP. I could probably continue on for the rest of this article, there are too many, but I'll stop there.

AU: Have any bands who have used your rehearsal space in the past gone on to be popular and successful in the music world?

Jesse: I don't know if I've been open long enough for that to happen yet? There was one band that moved in on day one but moved out two years later called Sham Family. They were steadily getting bigger every day and toured a lot, so it made sense why they outgrew me. They played Danforth Music Hall in 2023, and I was luckily able to catch a more intimate show the following month at Houndstooth. They're amazing and I miss them very much.

AU: Is there a possibility of the space becoming a venue in the future?

Jesse: Yes, absolutely! I can't go into too much detail, as a few pieces still have to fall into the right place, but the working plan is to have a

DIY event space in the basement of the building sometime between 2028 and 2030. Considering the name of my business, I was toying with calling the venue 'The Engine Room.'



We already host an annual alt market called 'Interstellar Punk Bazaar' in our parking lot over the summer. It features a bunch of vendors selling art, curious, specimens, music and more. Plus, we have a stage for live music throughout the day.

A former tenant of the building, Rue Morgue Magazine, hosted the Spooky Flea Market on the same

site, but when they moved locations, I and a couple other volunteers took over as the spiritual successors.

AU: How can musicians get a hold of you to get more info or book the space?

Jesse: Call, text or email. I even have an ad somewhere else in this very publication with a nifty QR code! I have no staff, it's just me, and I rarely sleep.

AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?

Jesse: Trash Panda Productions (another contributor to Absolute Underground) and myself are currently running a promotion where if you are an artist performing at any of their shows from now until May 1st you can save up to \$600 on a new one-year lease.

And maybe check out my band? We released a cover album last summer, which is all Randy Newman as punk songs. Because it's a cover album and we didn't want to mess with royalties, it's completely free to download off our website. starshipexperience.com

spacestationrehearsals.com

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Handsome Dick Manitoba Born In The Bronx - Part 2

Interview by Ira Hunter and Dustin Jak

AU: What can people expect from your live show these days?

HDM: What it is right now is really a bunch of Dictators songs, a handful of covers. There's an interesting point that Daniel Rey once brought up to me. We were sunbathing in Italy and I said, "We could throw in a new song or two," and he goes, "People don't want to hear it." I go, "Well, what if you're creative and you have a song?" He goes, "Listen, Iggy puts out a new album and everybody claps respectfully, but they want to hear 'I Wanna Be Your Dog.'" It's not a bad point, but then the other point is I have the craving to get out and make one of my new songs good so it fits in with the other old good songs. So, I wrote a new song and it went over well every time we played it. Eventually, what I'd like to do is like six or seven Dictator songs and six new songs. For now, we're doing our favourite Dictators songs. We're trying to just do an exciting, fun rock n' roll show so people can have a great time, and leave sweating and smiling.

AU: Any chance you'd come through Canada?

HDM: We'll make it through to anywhere, to anyone who wants to pay us. I don't mean to sound like a money-hungry guy, because I'm not.

I'm not a kid anymore. I'm on the road. I'm busting my ass. So, if you guys up there want to put together a six-show tour, I'd run to do it.

AU: Scott "Top Ten" Kempner recently passed away. I know he was an old friend of yours.

HDM: It was almost 59 years of friendship. We met in the fourth grade and we were best friends forever. It was really sad the way he went. He was such a bright guy and so clever and so talented. Life is so beautiful and so cruel at the same time.

AU: We did a small memorial for him in the magazine. Sorry to bring that up.

HDM: That's great that you did. I always say, I talk about my best friends that died, I tell stories about them. I quote them. That's the best you can do to sort of keep them "alive."

AU: Wildest show you can remember?

HDM: We played a wacky concert where we had a professional magician and a master of ceremonies. It was called the Ms. All Bare America pageant. It was like 14 girls that introduced and interviewed almost like Miss America, except naked on stage. The Dictators were in the basement of this 3,000-seat theatre in uptown Manhattan. We're on a riser and we're coming up and we're playing *America The Beautiful*. The next week we're playing CBGBs and the girl who won the contest jumps up on stage, pulls her pants down and pulls her shirt up. You could see her titties, you

could also see the bush. I got nervous. I didn't know what to do. So, I dropped

to the floor in front of Mark the Animal and I stuck my fingers between her legs and gave the peace sign. The thing is, because of the style of her bush, you could tell what era it was from. Kids would come into the bar, Manitoba's bar and that was one of the pictures on the wall. They look at it and they see the bush and then they see these two fingers in between and they don't know what to make of it. Like is that a weird two fingered penis? What is that? Nowadays they got bushes, they got no bushes, they got whatever. But that was a pretty great moment. It was a great rock n' roll moment.

AU: What was it like singing with the reunited version of the MC5?

DM: Absolute fucking fun. So, the phone rings and it's Wayne. I had done two songs with them at The Bowery Ballroom and the Village Voice, the newspaper at the time, said that Handsome Dick Manitoba almost stole the show. So, Wayne calls me up and says, "How'd you like to go to Europe for about three weeks for a bus tour?" I go, "Well I'd love to, but I've got to go home and check in



with the boss." We had like a two-year-old kid. I went home and she said, "Absolutely you can go." What can I tell you? I went to country after country, gig after gig. It was wonderful. Wayne



HANDSOME DICK MANITOBA

was one of the brightest guys I've known and one of my favourite guitar players and one of my favourite bands.

AU: What were some of the earliest shows in New York City you witnessed as far as underground music goes?

DM: Bruce Springsteen did a show, he left the stage and everyone's going, "Bruce! Bruce!" He comes back on and he changed into a Dictator's t-shirt and dedicated "Born to Run" to me and the boys. That was pretty cool. I'm not sure what's underground and what's not underground. I can tell you the earliest shows I saw. We had a place called The Fillmore East, which to me was the greatest rock venue ever. That was actually a block from where I live now, it's been a bank for decades. I saw Procol Harum. I saw Albert King, a great blues artist. Chuck Berry and The Who for five hours. Then I saw The Who again a few weeks later. I saw The Kinks and Spirit. I saw the last show, which was J. Geils and the Allman Brothers. I saw a whole bunch of shows there. When I was 15 years old, I saw The Stooges at The Electric Circus in 1969. That was one of the great shows I saw. I saw the J. Geils band open up for the MC5. I saw The Byrds and the MC5 playing together outdoors. Those are like my early shows like 15, 16. It's been an old saying, that a Jewish boy becomes a man when he gets Bar Mitzvahed and turns 13. The Fillmore East had an early show and a late show. I go to my mother, "Can I go to the late show?" "No." When I was 13 years old, I was a dopey little white boy, Jewish kid. You know when I became a man? When I went to a late show at The Fillmore East.

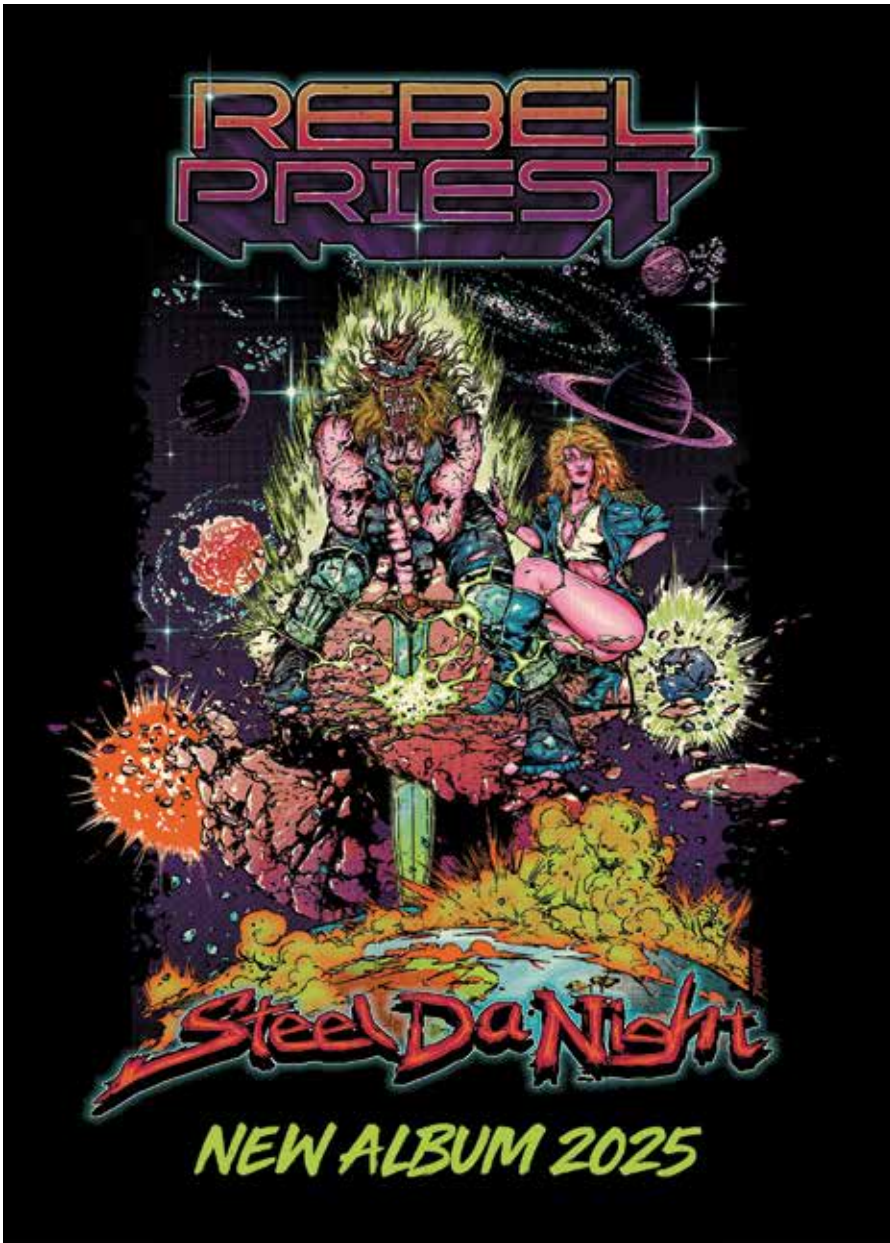
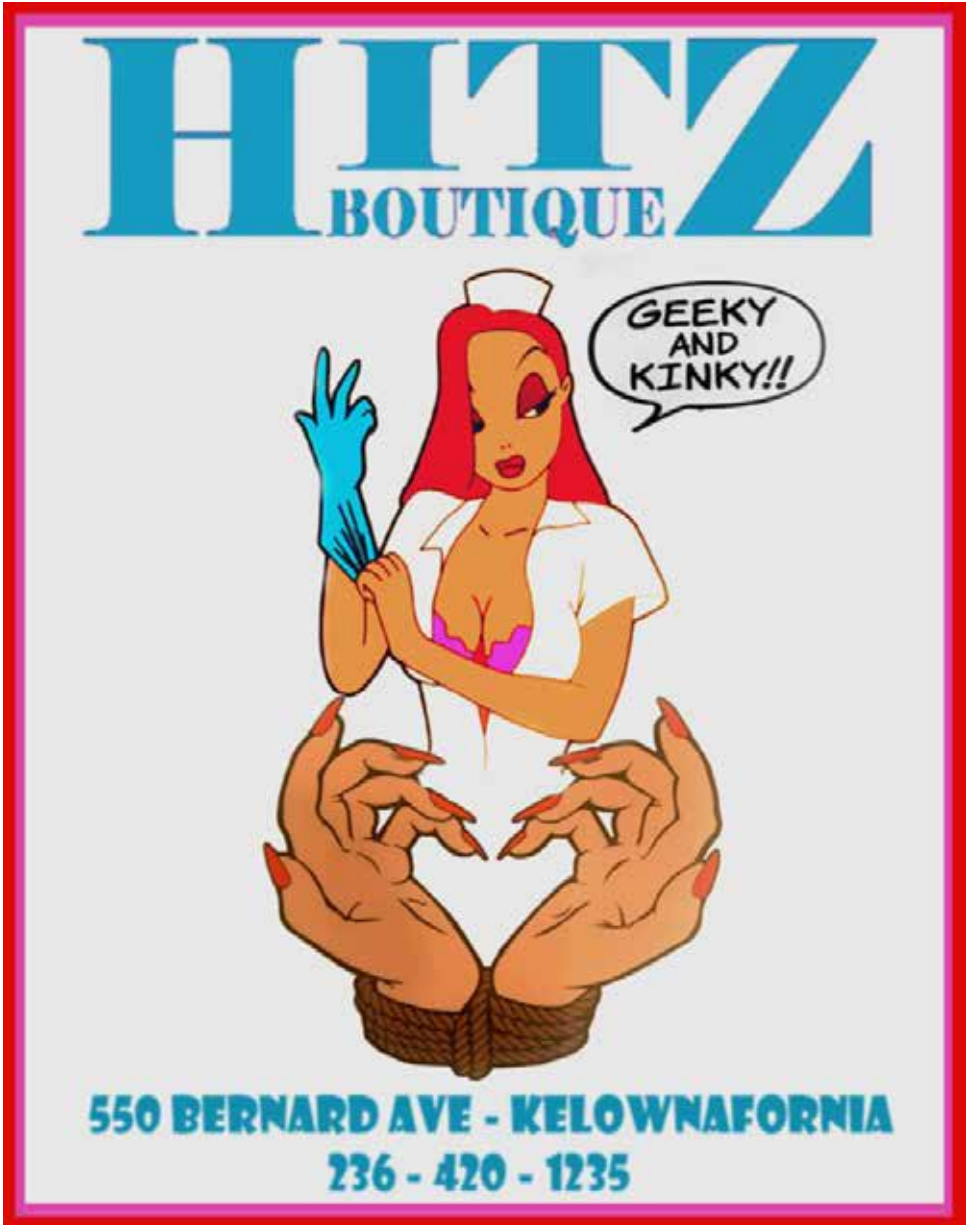
AU: Who are your favourite New York City bands from back in the '70s?

DM: The Ramones, Blondie, the Dead Boys.

AU: Any other final words?

DM: Yes, get some lovely people who own clubs who think we're worth bringing up there and we'll come up there and play for you.

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Helevorn

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Josep Brunet: I am Josep Brunet, the singer of the band. I am a physiotherapist and I work in my own consultancy treating people with pain, in general. Besides, I take care of my two children.

AU: How is it to be a band based on the Spanish island of Mallorca? Do you find yourselves sometimes restricted being based out there?

JB: Without a doubt, living on an island is a significant limitation, but the connection to mainland Europe is very good from Mallorca. There are things that limit us much more in our case, like the lack of a strong metal culture here and the little interest from the media in our style. But despite all that, we've been releasing albums and playing abroad for twenty-five years, so we're not doing too badly.

AU: You released your new and fifth album *Espectres*, what can you tell us about it?

JB: *Espectres* comes five years after the release of *Aamamata* and after many lineup changes, with only Sandro (guitarist) and I remaining, so you can imagine how much the band has changed. Two years ago, the band became complete again with new musicians, but of course, the way of composing— and even the composers themselves— were different, and this is noticeable in the album.

There's a return to more Doom-oriented sounds.



The riffs are heavier, and curiously, the songs are more atmospheric. Rawness and, at times, a touch of sweetness masked by harsh reality. Production has once again been a key pillar, so we opted for the 'Mega' + Jens Bogren tandem. Eight songs of Doom/Death with Gothic reminiscences. That would be the summary.

AU: What inspired you to write an album based on Hauntology?

JB: Hauntology has given us a space for absolute reflection and coherence. We can't separate the music from the lyrical concept because it's all one. The idea of how absences shape our behaviour, even more than the present, has provided us with significant creative space, allowing us to trace lines of time and space within the album itself. The spectral aspect gives the album a lot of strength, and I think it aligns perfectly with the style of music we propose.

AU: How much of Mark Fisher's writings inspired the band for this record?

JB: Mark Fisher has given us all the ingredients for *Espectres* to have that emotional yet gut-wrenching weight. There's no room for nostalgia here— everything is a ghost in our minds that leads us directly to the abyss. The lost futures, the temporary breaches and similar concepts are fundamental to

understanding the album.

What's incredible is that Fisher's perspective as a music critic has helped us understand many aspects of the band that we weren't aware of before, like how there has been no real musical evolution since the '90s. This has driven us into a creative dead-end, explaining the massive cultural and musical crisis we're facing, especially

in metal.

AU: Does the band have any plans to come to North America?

JB: There's a higher chance we'll head to South America, but we're not ruling anything out. The tour in Canada in 2019 was unforgettable, and we'd love to go back someday.

AU: Who are some of the band's favourite North American doom metal bands?

JB: I admit we've been much more influenced by European Doom bands, but I like A Pale Horse Named Death, YOB, Daylight Dies, Pallbearer, October Noir, etc.

AU: In your last album, you said you were best described as 'Mediterranean Doom', how do you best describe that sound to our readers?

JB: Yes, we use the term 'Mediterranean' to describe a set of musical influences drawn from traditional music that we subtly incorporated into *Aamamata*. Some chords, some progressions in the songs, etc., and above all, the lyrical concept, which was closely tied to our 'Mediterranean homeland'— today, a graveyard for people trying to cross it in search of a better life. It's worth noting that we are likely witnessing a resurgence of melodic Doom/Death bands in southern Europe, and I'm not sure if the 'Mediterranean' label would fit there...

AU: You have performed at many fests along with sharing the stage with some great names such as Swallow the Sun, Katatonia, Draconian, Saturnus, Rotting Christ, Primordial, and more, which festivals and shows have been some of your most memorable?

JB: I vividly remember the Devilstone Open Air in Lithuania, in 2010. It was our first big festival, and



they had us play just before Mayhem. We hit it off really well with them and had an amazing time. People there were inviting us to drink vodka, and when Mayhem started their concert with intro-drums— we began dancing the conga with the audience, waving a Norwegian flag. We laughed so much.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

JB: We invite you to listen to *Espectres* and let yourself be carried away by its eight musical spectres. Warm regards!

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Insurrection

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: It's been 11 years since we last spoke to the band for the 2013 album *Prototype*; what has Insurrection been up to?

Insurrection: Oh wow, what hasn't happened... Well, a lot of things haven't not happened and what did happen did. Uh... In clearer terms, we did the Galy Records things, he left the biz, we went the indie route some more, and we changed the entire lineup except for Stef (who started talking about himself in the third person it seems), including welcoming back Mart who was part of the original lineup. We released *Extraction* in 2017, we went on a cross-country tour to the prairies (didn't have time to make it to BC, unfortunately). Played the last rock fest in Montebello, had lots of laughs overall, and never gave up!

AU: You released a new album *Obsolescence*, what can you tell us about this record?

Insurrection: What can I say? It took way too long to get to releasing it, most of the music was done during the end of the world, but getting together to learn and perfect it took something like two years, then recording, then the whole releasing... But we're super proud of what we've built! Every song on there belongs; no filler. We even managed something we never did before... A trilogy of songs!

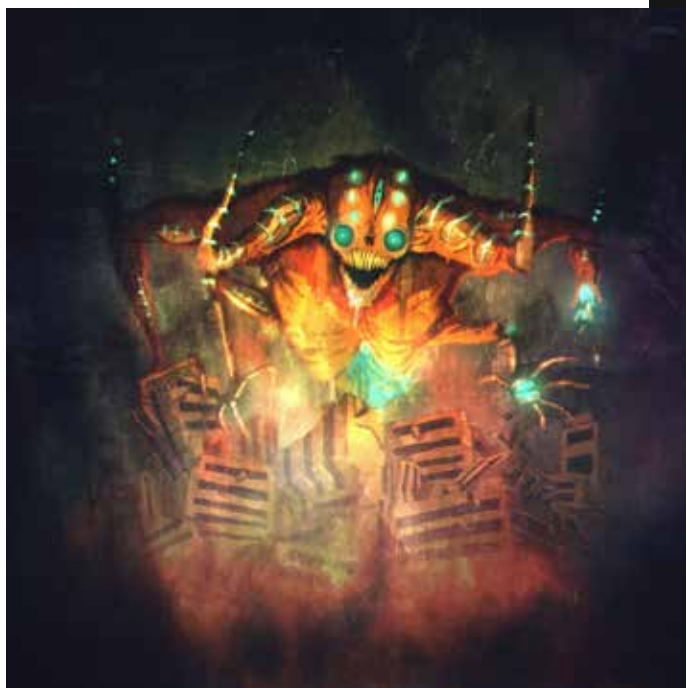
AU: Really enjoyed the Honest Trailer you did for your music video "The Gathering". How has this been received? What made you decide to make one?

Insurrection: We made the

Honest trailer just because of Mart's awesome radio-friendly voice. Our bassist does the voice over and we thought it was too hilarious not to share it with the world. And since music videos are always corny, we thought we'd take the tongue-in-cheek approach to it. We think people had a good laugh and it was a great way of thanking the people who helped us with the ACTUAL "Gathering" video.

AU: You teamed up with Joe Lyko of Dark Moon Productions to co-produce the album and do your music video "The Gathering", how did you decide to work with him? We hear he's becoming a legend on the Ottawa scene.

Insurrection: Joe Lyko's name has been around for a few years and we thought why not give it a shot? We Wanted something that sounded well produced with a modern sound, PLUS he lives 10 minutes away so that's a big bonus. The guy's



incredibly patient and works hard so that was a good pick!

AU: The band has been together for 20 years, what words of advice would you give from your experiences as a grinding band to up-and-coming bands?

Insurrection: Surround yourself with people you'd wanna be in a van with for 8-10 hours at a time. Communication is key, and make sure you're having fun, cuz the megabuck\$ are definitely not coming your way anytime soon unless you quit your job and throw yourself into it head-first. (Don't throw yourself into it head-first, please.)

AU: You've always been a very Canadian/Quebec band, it can be rare to have a band do metal lyrics in both English and French, how have you been received when playing to Anglo fans and Franco Fans? And does it change your songwriting in any way?

Insurrection: I'd say most of the Anglo crowd

doesn't realize the wrahhwrahh's are in French or doesn't care! It's all noise. I think the French side of people like the idea but they probably don't bother with the lyrical content all that much either, but it gets noticed more because it's a rarer thing.

AU: What are the band's 2025 plans?

Insurrection: Keep spreading the word about the new album, go out on the road. And then some. And again. And again.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

Insurrection: NO! Um, well ok, maybe. We really hope to see everyone out there at shows, we've had to stop during the pandemic, to a point where people questioned if we were still there, so we really missed everyone, hope to see everyone on the road!

insurrectioncanada.bandcamp.com

Pet Retina

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?

Max: I'm Max, I play drums in Pet Retina, I mostly otherwise play solo as i.o (sometimes as a duo) and in many different improvisational projects, noise, free jazz, etc, and beyond.

Lauren: I'm Lauren, I make noise in Pet Retina, my solo project is Void Puppet and I also make noise in Androgyne.

AU: How would you describe yourselves?

Lauren: I like to think of us as a glitchy percussive hurricane.

Max: We are a noise rock band that has a lot more of the noise than rock, I feel like because we have the performance and musical element of the drums, we don't fully fit into the world of pure electronic harsh noise, but at the same time the harsh noise electronics we have alienate us from the world of guitar-based bands.

AU: What are some of your favourite electronics you've messed around with lately?

Lauren: I've been using an electromagnetic microphone that I can put on anything electronic and it converts the frequency into sound. During our last performance, I put it on a Speak and Spell as well as a Hello Kitty Oto-hime, which is a device that creates the sound of water flowing for people who are embarrassed to use the public restroom. I hear they're very common in Japan.

AU: A lot of people don't really understand Noise as a... genre... can you call it that? What drew you to it initially?

Max: Noise music has been around for a lot longer than many people realize, probably for over 100 years at this point, or older depending on your point of view. People who don't get it should maybe try to realize that this is all a part of a living art tradition that has gone through

many different artistic movements. I had already been playing free jazz and free improvisation for almost a decade before I played with anyone doing harsh noise, but I very much see it as an extension of that improvisation. As a drummer, there is a freedom that accompanying a noise instrumentalist allows me that's impossible to replicate playing with traditional instruments; there's a relentlessness to the energy.



Lauren: It's honestly a never-ending outlet for creation. There are so many ways to make and record and perform noise, I never get bored of it. I started recording by myself during lockdown and started exploring different setups until I discovered circuit-bending and wanted to build and modify my own gear.

AU: Max, the first time I met you, I saw you do some insane non-stop drumming over like a half hour. What inspired you to learn how to drum like that? How do you not pass out?

Max: When I was 17 years old, I first saw a video of the band Hella playing the song "Biblical Violence", it was the first time in my life that I connected with something on that deep of a level and made sense to me in a way nothing else ever had before. I've never been the kind of person who can compartmentalize their influences; I can't play this intense noise rock stuff and also just happen to be in a blues rock band. Everything I learn and listen to has to somehow inform or enhance the noise rock. I try to take away

something from everything and everyone I can.

AU: Lauren, what makes a prime candidate for circuit-bending? Any advice for anyone who wants to try it?

Lauren: I only circuit-bend things that are battery powered for safety reasons. I look for anything from the '80s or '90s specifically because of the way the circuit boards were built compared to today. Things that make a wide variety of sounds, like kids' pianos with lots of sound effects and options, and things that are cheap because sometimes you fry the circuit boards by accident; I try not to modify anything that's expensive or I'm emotionally attached to.

I would suggest buying some cheap toys and some alligator clips. Open up the toy and try poking around on the circuit board with both ends of the clips while the toy is on and playing out loud. If you hear a glitch or change in speed when placing the clips onto certain points, you can map that area out as a potential place to modify. A great resource is the inventor of circuit bending: Reed Ghazala his website (anti-theory.com) has tons of resources and instructions on how to do just about anything, plus his life is a really cool rabbit hole.

AU: What's special about the Victoria scene?

Max: Despite Victoria having a great supportive scene for noise with some good turnouts, it still is half the time the stereotypical noise gig with 5-10 people in attendance. Something that does make it special here is that there are a lot of people who aren't 'noise people' who are willing to come check out a show; it isn't like that in other scenes. Punk shows aren't just for punks, indie shows aren't just for indie people, etc. The shows feel more like community events; you see the same faces at shows of all genres.

AU: You just released Four Suites for Circuit Bent Toys and Percussion. Tell us about it.

Max: There was kind of a very on-brand lack of planning that went into it, Lauren just kind of set a few different things up and then we started playing, but compared to our last recordings where we recorded the drums and noise in a separate and disjointed way, we did this one live and together in single takes. We recorded with Cody Baresich at his studio, it was his first time recording a noise record like this, but I think his experience in recording grindcore and extreme metal bands where you need to get drums to punch through extremely loud and distorted music made sense. We're proud of how we played and how it came out sounding.

Lauren: Cody did such an amazing job, I brought as much stuff as I could to the studio and just kept switching up pedal chains and sound sources between takes. It turned out really well.

AU: You also put on local shows as Near Dark, and have hosted 24 touring bands over the last couple of years, on top of local projects. What inspired you to start putting on shows?

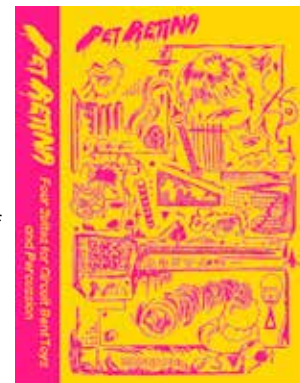
Max: I think most people here start putting on shows just to have an opportunity for their own projects to play, but since then, Victoria has definitely become a bit of a destination for experimental artists and genres now because of what we're doing. I think as we've grown to be seen as one of the more prominent promoters here, it affects the type of bands and projects people want to start here, so we're trying to do our best to give all these projects opportunities to play.

AU: Advice for those wanting to put on shows?

Max: I would encourage people to try and think outside the box, don't just book the same venues that everyone plays at with the same four bands. You need to think of your own unique angle and what you can add to the ecosystem; what isn't happening in the scene that only you have the vision to make happen?

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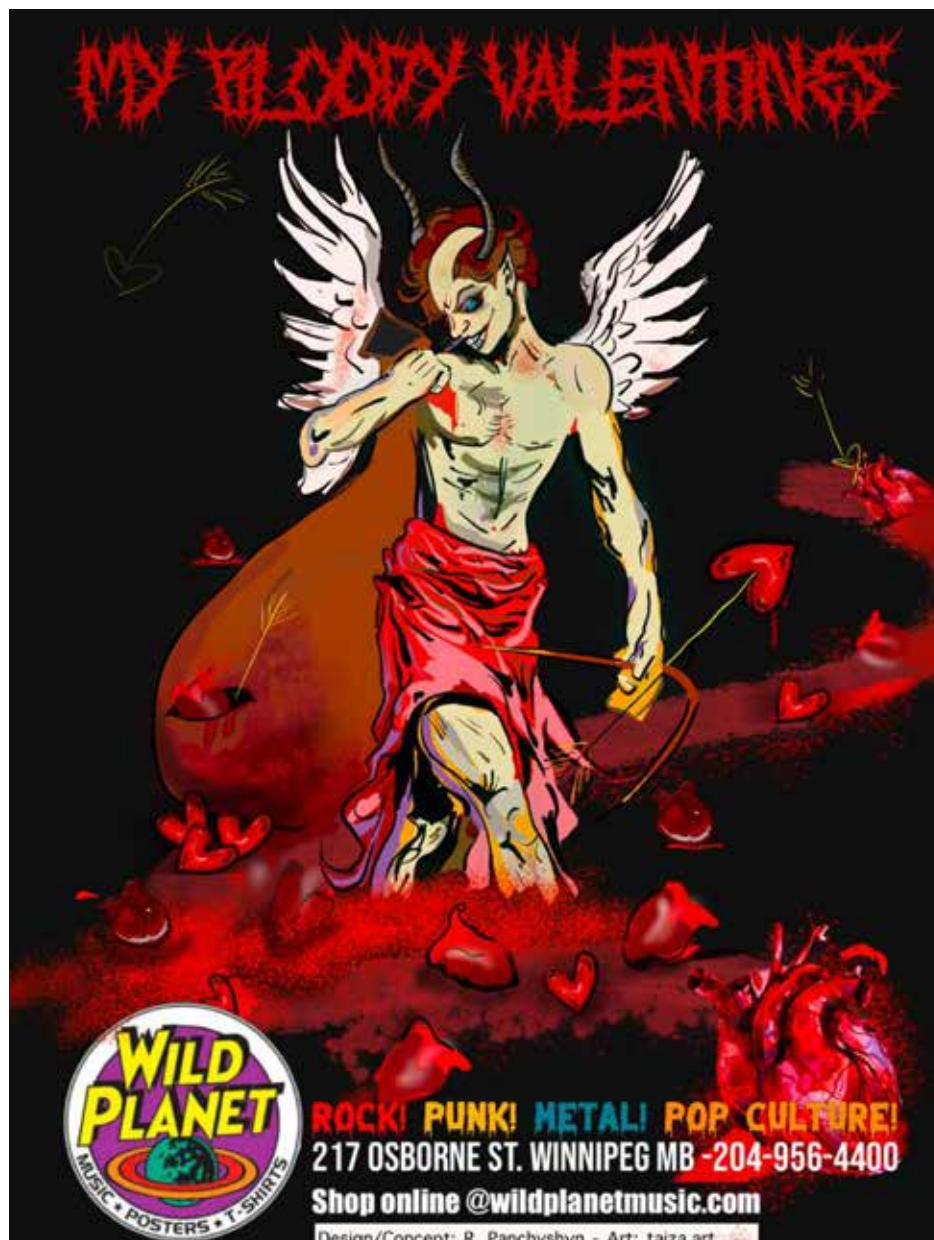
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Spectator 6

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Spectator 6: You are talking to Annie (synths, vocals, and drum machine), Kelly (bass and vocals), and Tallulah (guitars and vocals), who are Spectator 6. We are most known for living heavily in the past, through our music.

AU: Give us a brief history of Spectator 6: how did you get together?

Annie: This band kind of started as a joke with a couple of different friends, we played at a wedding and did a few new wave covers with everyone playing synthesizers. We had so much fun we thought afterwards, let's make a band like Depeche Mode but write our own material. I guess after a short period of time I got pretty excited about the whole thing, got all serious and wanted to put a little more time into it than the others did. So, I'm thinking, who can be in this band with me?

Well, it was easy with Tallulah— we were already in another band together, on our original instruments (bass for me, keyboards for her). I knew she played some guitar. I think for a brief time we were doing both bands at the same time, until S6 just kind of took over.

We met Kelly at her gig with Cora and the Moon, and her singing and bass playing really impressed me. We didn't really know each other at all, but we followed each other on Instagram— I just messaged her and said, "Hey want to come play music with us?" Thankfully she said yes.

AU: Spectator 6 is a definite throwback to '80s new wave and has a certain '90s girl band feel to it too. Where do you get your inspiration for your music?

Annie: I'm a bit of an old lady— my formative years were in the '80s and the music I write has always had an '80s sound to it, even when I wasn't trying. I was actually in a '90s girl band that had a very small bit of success, in that people wanted to pay for us to put our music out and tour etc, and that was probably my most active time musically.

AU: What's your songwriting process like? Lyrics or music first?

Annie: Music first, always. Chords, then melody, and then trying to mash the lyrics in to fit the melody. Whenever I try lyrics first, it never works.

AU: Your songs often seem to have feminist themes to them, what can you tell us about that? Does your music have a message or are they more a personal expression for you?

Annie: Honestly, since 9-11 I have been pretty obsessed with politics— obviously there are HUGE challenges coming our way and I think that only through cooperation are we going to be able to meet them. The current trend seems to be one of denial and relying on authoritarians or oligarchs, and I think that's the coward's way of facing the future. I am and have always been feminist, and for a long time have thought that change was needed, particularly with power always in the hands of old white men. Lately, I'm more inclined to think we need all of us involved, regardless of race or gender or identity; whoever you are, we need to be coming up with and sharing ideas and working together, which means we need to stop letting the powers that be distract us with false divisions.

Our first EP/album was really largely about having a broken heart (in a somewhat tongue in cheek way) but it's true that time heals! So yeah, I'd say our songs are very personal, although the new ones have segued into our general fears for the future.



AU: Do you have any new music in the works?

Tallulah: Yes! We have lots of great new tunes. Some we have been playing live for a while now and some are still really new. We want to do some recording in the new year. Maybe another album, or even just start releasing some singles. I've been working at playing more than cowboy chords on the guitar, which is how I started out with S6 and our first album, so it's exciting to have new stuff that I feel like I have a bit more range.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Annie: Check out Scarlet Fever and Chloe Doucet on your favourite streaming service! And also a few other bands we're involved with! China

Repair, Pill Squad, Zolty Cracker, and Victims of Sound.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

S6: Thank you so much for listening!

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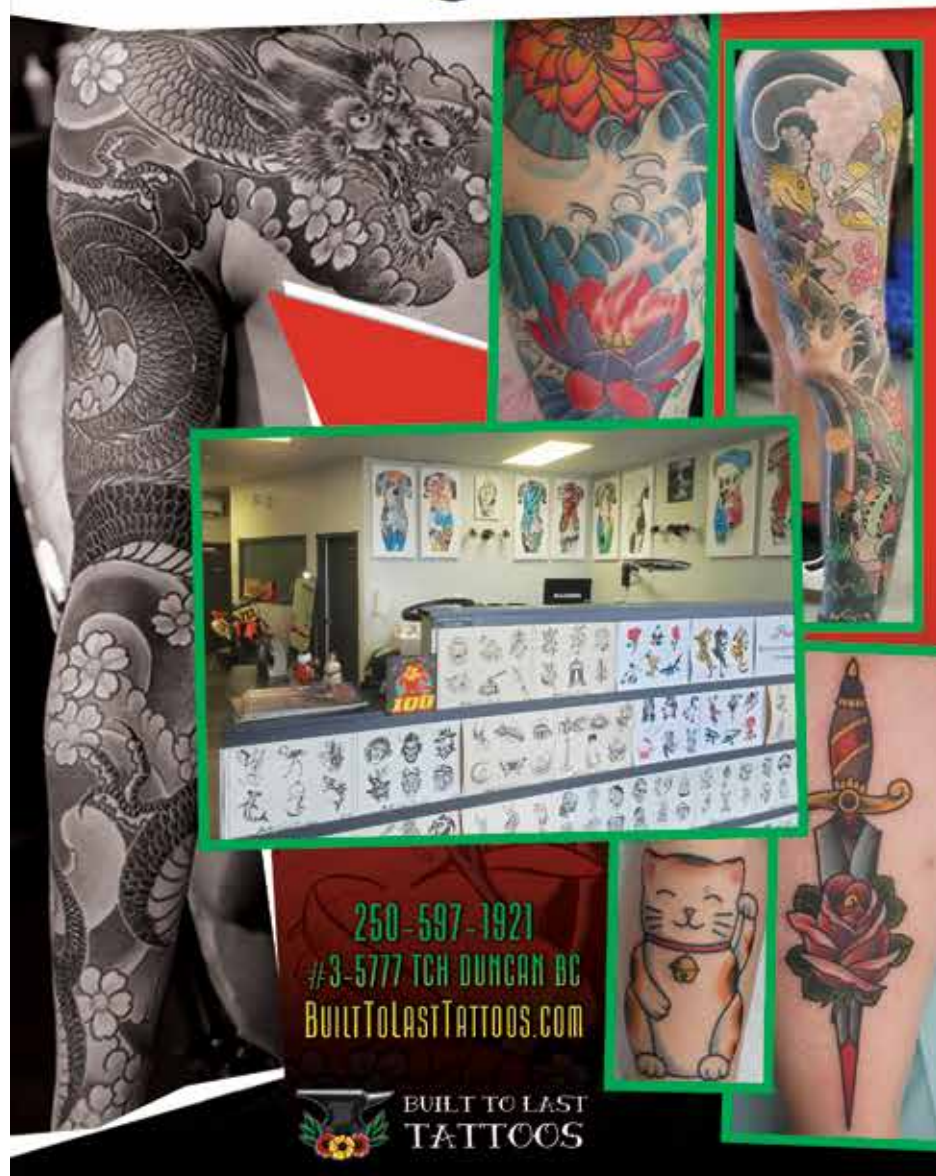
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The Cult That Never Was

By Jamo Lorswal

"We're fascists," quoted infamous lead singer of LA scene punk band The Germs in interview. Darby Crash was purposely obscure, outrageous, controversial, and to our millennial culture super un-PC.

The Germs are recalled for one album release and a period of sheer debauchery that literally ruled the Los Angeles punk music subculture. Historically noted as the origin of hard-core, Germs Incognito (GI) is also referred to as noise. Mostly because the band could hardly play their instruments, with novice drummer Belinda Carlyle playing a few gigs. It wasn't just that they had been able to draw the youth to excess at what became their own secret "rave" at underground club The Masque, it was more the mesmerism, the overbearing charisma, and the narcissism of frontman Darby Crash.

Jan Paul Bearhm caught the nickname Bobby Pyns in high school from his anti-authority attitude and wearing safety pins clipped into ragged clothes. From early music attempts with

outfits Sophisfucker and Revlon Spam Queens, the sexually ambiguous prankster was often high on acid, socially pathological excepting that he entertained strangers and friends with poetry and authoritative philosophies.

As the Germs' following grew his plan to go down as what drummer Donny Bolles described as "the new Jesus/Bowie/Manson/L. Ron Hubbard" went awry when in 1980 he

convinced longtime girlfriend Casey Cola to take a heroic suicidal dose (\$400 worth of heroin). As Darby did not wake, Casey survived the event. His death was overshadowed ironically by the shooting of world-famous rocker ex-Beatle John Lennon.

While a clever lyricist and certainly an icon of the berserker aspect of punk, the shows were often spotted by Darby's own blood from gashing himself onstage and the audience being egged on to more and more violence (think Murder Junkies), his dream of cult leader status is now an effigy at most. Simply put, the docu-book *Lexicon Devil* is one of the best penned about punk rock. There also exists a documentary *What We Do is Secret*, sadly it all reflects the deep possibility that Jan Paul was really just a troubled poet, and could have been more than a flashing meteor of weird fame.

Photo from the 1979 Flipside Calendar courtesy of Alice Bag via Flickr

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Rod Rodrigues

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Rod Rodrigues: I'm an instrumental guitar player and music teacher.

AU: You released your latest album *Tales of A Changing Life Part 2*, which you've stated is a conceptual album and the second part of a story inspired by your move to a new country and starting a new life. What can you tell us about this?

RR: I've always liked conceptual albums, such as Dream Theater's *Scenes from A Memory*, Rush's *2112*, Marillion's *Misplaced Childhood*, etc. And after 12 years of not releasing a solo album (my first EP *The First Step: Introduction* was released in 2010), I wanted to push my boundaries as a musician, songwriter and artist. Since 2014, my life has changed a lot, and I wanted to tell my stories through notes and melodies. Even

though *Tales of A Changing Life* Part 1 and 2 are instrumentals, with the only exception of "Saudade" which has Wesley Poison's poem, all the other songs are instrumentals. The concept is based on my personal experience of deciding to leave my home country to build a new life in a country with cultural and social differences. The songs have joy, frustration, sadness and love with all the moments I have lived in the last 10 years.

AU: How is the music scene in Toronto compared to your experience in Brazil?

RR: Similar in some ways but different in others. It seems like the music industry here often depends on what's happening in the US. My impression is that, for an artist to be really successful in Canada, they need to be recognized by the Americans or even perform in the US. In Brazil, it's not like that. Most popular artists there don't rely on performing in other countries. However, they do need to play the kind of music that's popular on the radio, like country or pop.

On the other hand, I think the underground music

scene is better in Canada. There are more venues here that support local and new artists, and the scene feels more organized compared to Brazil.

AU: What have you enjoyed about living in Canada?

RR: Canada is amazing! It's such a welcoming country. At first, it was definitely challenging because everything was so different, the culture, the language, and especially the food. I really miss Brazilian food though, haha!

AU: You have studied guitar with renowned musicians like Kiko Loureiro (Megadeth) and Greg Howe (Justin Timberlake, Michael Jackson, and others), how did this come to be?

RR: I first met Kiko Loureiro in the early 2000s, right after Angra's first breakup. He used to host weekly guitar clinics at the conservatory where I studied. We jammed a few times during those sessions, and there's even a video on my YouTube channel of one of those jams when I was 19 years old. I also had a few private lessons with him around that time. Kiko isn't just an amazing guitar player, he's also incredibly smart when it comes to the music business.

Greg Howe is my favourite guitar player of all times, and you can definitely hear his influence in my phrasing. He's on another level, no one plays like Greg. His groove, speed, and those wild fusion licks are almost impossible to copy. During the pandemic, I was lucky to take a couple of online lessons with him.

I didn't just learn from the lessons I had with them but also from watching and listening to their music. It taught me a lot about improvisation and, most importantly, how to really listen. That's something many beginner guitar players don't realize, listening while you play is just as important as playing itself.

AU: What is it about the guitar instrument that has drawn you to learn and do serious studies for it?

RR: My mom always wanted me to learn guitar, but it wasn't until I discovered Guns N' Roses that I truly felt the urge to play. However, I actually started with drums first. One of my dad's friends had a son who played

drums and was about to get a new kit. He decided to give me his old kit, so I tried teaching myself how to play.

Not long after that, I started taking guitar lessons because it was the instrument I truly wanted to play. Now, almost 35 years later, I'm still playing guitar!

AU: You teach yourself, are you taking on new students?

RR: I've been teaching guitar since 1997, and over the years, I've seen many generations of new guitar players fall in love with the instrument. I'm now accepting new private students for in-person lessons in Toronto and online lessons. I also run my own Online Guitar Academy.

AU: What's next for you?

RR: I have three more videos from my new album coming out soon, and I'm also working on two new online courses. By June, I plan to release these courses and possibly a new single as well.

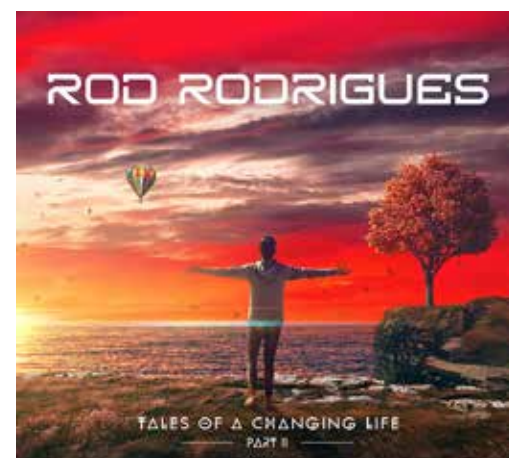
AU: Where can listeners find your physical merchandise and digital?

RR: On my Bandcamp. My album is also available on all streaming platforms and YouTube.

rodrodrigues.bandcamp.com

rrguitaracademy.com

Photo by Allan Cabral





WHEELS OF FREEDOM

Skateboarding Roots & Culture Exhibit

Pop Cult Museum - Qualicum Beach, BC
November 2024 - March 2025

AU: Who are we talking with today?

My name is Lucas Unger. I've been working at the shop for about seven months now.

AU: What was it like when you heard that a PD's Hot Shop was opening in Qualicum Beach?

Pretty exciting. It was a total shocker. The skate scene wasn't too big in my high school at the time and then it kind of definitely took off once the shop opened. Everybody was super stoked.

AU: You work at PD's Hot Shop but there's also a museum attached to it?

It's called the Pop Cult Museum. It exhibits vintage skateboards, bikes, art, toys, snowboards and related cultural artifacts. We have a new exhibit every couple months. The latest exhibit, Wheels of Freedom, is a skateboard retrospective. It kind of goes through all the different stages and evolutions that

skateboarding has had over the years.

AU: I'm assuming it has a bunch of boards. Does it also have the trucks and the wheels?

Yes there is all that included. We also have some sort of scooter things from the 1920s. Like the first manufactured toys that kids were riding on the streets, not including bikes.

AU: Can you kind of describe the show for people that haven't checked it out yet?

It goes through stages sort of every

decade. It starts with the '20s and '30s and then goes on from there. Then as you wrap around the room there are posters on the walls that describe the era and the biggest advancements of the time. Then there's lots of examples of the best skateboards of that time. As you work around the room, you can see the evolution of the boards and

the style of skating that people were doing. There's lots of good information describing each era, too.

AU: Then at some point does Skull Skates come into the picture? In the late '70s or '80s?

Yeah, but PD tried to make it not just about Skull Skates. There is a Hammerhead Skull Skates deck from the '80s in there and an old G.N.C. board from the '70s in there too, which is pretty neat. But it's not centered towards Skull Skates at all. It's kind of just encapsulating all of skateboarding. There is also skateboard mags.

AU: What were the earliest skateboards?

It gets pretty complicated because there's lots of sort of hybrid skateboards. At the start people would take old roller skates apart and then strap them to two by fours.

AU: I hear those old clay or steel wheels were a death trap. You hit one little rock and you'd just go flying. The evolution of the urethane wheel and everything is also so important.

Yeah and that's all displayed here as well. The museum goes up to the 2000s and it's kind of funny because skateboarding is kind of looping right now. Lots of the early 2000s and late '90s trends are coming back. But the last thing displayed in the museum is our Qualicum Skeleton Beach board 8.5" deck



SHRED SESSION

that we've built up with sort of modern components. Kind of displaying what we sell at the shop right now.

AU: Do you snowboard?

All the time. I actually got the new Crystal Ocean Endeavor board that PD put out not too long ago. It's been really awesome. It's 154 but it rides like a 158 because of the surface contact. It's a wider base board so it's really nice for rails and stuff. It's got a really stiff feel unlike most boards that come out nowadays that are pretty flexy.

AU: Skull Skates just did a snowboard collaboration, you have the beach board, so there are still new designs happening?

We're always trying to push skateboarding and looking to kind of refine skateboarding and try to spread new light to skateboarding. We're always just looking for innovation. I'm always stoked to see new people skating. So if the museum brings new people into skating, that's kind of our goal.



AU: Anything else to mention?

The museum is open seven days a week but will only be open on weekends in February. Stay tuned to PD's Hot Shop on Instagram for museum hours and updates. Museum admission by a suggested donation of \$5.

skullskates.com

[@pdshotshop_qualicum_beach](https://www.instagram.com/pdshotshop_qualicum_beach)



NEXT SHOWS

DOA

April 18th
Princeton BC
The Legion



theshittalkers.com
music/videos/swag

www.youtube.com/@theshittalkers3322

NEXT SHOWS

MEBATS

April 25th
Vancouver BC
Lana Lou's



Bison
EP Quack
2023



Dave's not Here
Self titled demo
2014



the THEY
EP I Scream
2018



ORKA SKATEBOARDING

Interview by Shred Turner

AU: Who are we talking to today and what are your skillz to pay da billz?

Orka is me (Aaron) and my brother Kari. We split responsibilities. I'm kind of more the idea and design guy and Kari is a little more numbers and marketing.

AU: What was the origin story Orka Skateboarding?

June 2023: We'd been talking daily for around a year about our experiences getting back into skateboarding. At this point we'd already been talking for years about doing something together and it finally clicked with this. I had an idea for some graphics, we settled quickly on the name and we had a strong focus to keep all production in Canada. Orka represents the PNW and is a nod to our distant Scandinavian roots. It means to

summon the will to do something. We think that applies well to skateboarding and to the founding of Orka Skateboarding itself.

AU: What is your mission statement?

Canadian, Community, Joyful abandon.

AU: What makes Orka unique in your opinion?

All of our production is completely in Canada.

We also strive to be radically inclusive.

AU: Do you currently sponsor a skate team?

A team is something we want to do right. We're still figuring that out. We're always on the lookout for young up-and-comers.

AU: Any collabs, comps, or demos planned?

Fuck yeah! We've got a collaboration with Vancouver local spooky skate punks The Fomites. Keep your eyes peeled! We also support local skate groups and skate events throughout the year, including QB Skaters in Qualicum Beach, JK All Day in Vancouver and the 100% Skate Club in Calgary.

AU: Advice for younger skaters starting out?

It's hard. It takes time. Be friendly and chill; and use SkateIQ.

AU: Any plans for a skate video in the future?

We'd love to at some point, but right now, we're lacking the expertise and team to see that through.

AU: What products do you currently have available?

Trucker hats, tee shirts, stickers, patches, back patches, skateboard decks, and toques.

AU: What's on the horizon for Orka Skateboarding?

More punk rock collabs, more sponsorships, more merch and

more word of mouth.

AU: Where did you grow up and what is the skateboarding scene like there?

We moved a lot, so all over Alberta and BC. Bonnyville, AB is where we probably spent the most time. The skate scene was basically all of our

friends with a couple of home made ramps and a crusty old town street. Much later, we had a town skatepark with weathered outdoor wooden features that were super intimidating to try. Eventually

we wound up in Calgary where we skated a lot of street and homemade rails. Millennium got built just as we were getting into university.

AU: When did you first jump on a skateboard and what first got you stoked on skateboarding?

We've got pictures from when I was about 5 and Kari was 3. I think it was probably Ninja Turtles! Later on the Tony Hawk video games and the X-Games.

AU: Where is your favourite place to skate?

Hastings Bowl in Vancouver! But I mostly ride Peter Sullivan in West Van because I can hit it on a lunch break.

AU: How would you describe your skateboarding style?

Old-ass beginner.

AU: What are some of your favourite tricks?

Hardflip - ever since the first Tony Hawk game. It's a life goal. I think one of the most stylish tricks is a backside tailslide back shuv out.

AU: Describe the sensation of skateboarding verbally if at all possible.

Kinetic energy, freedom, connection, perseverance.

AU: Any skateboarding superstitions?

I don't ride my best until I've fallen.

AU: Do you snowboard or surf as well? If so, what are the differences and similarities?

I used to. Snowboarding was my favourite for many years. I tried to get into surfing, but it's hard to do from here. One thing I love about surfing and snowboarding is the sense of connection you get with the environment. Skateboarding is great for giving you new appreciation for mundane urban environments. The biggest difference is the sheer difficulty of skateboarding. It

changes you.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

Probably an evening walk and wine with dinner, followed up with cuddles on the couch.

AU: Any dating/marriage advice?

Be a human being. Be authentic. Acknowledge them. It's easy to project onto those closest to you, but try not to. Talk with them, let them know what's going on. Appreciate the good, the bad, the little things. Be present.

AU: Any fetishes to share?

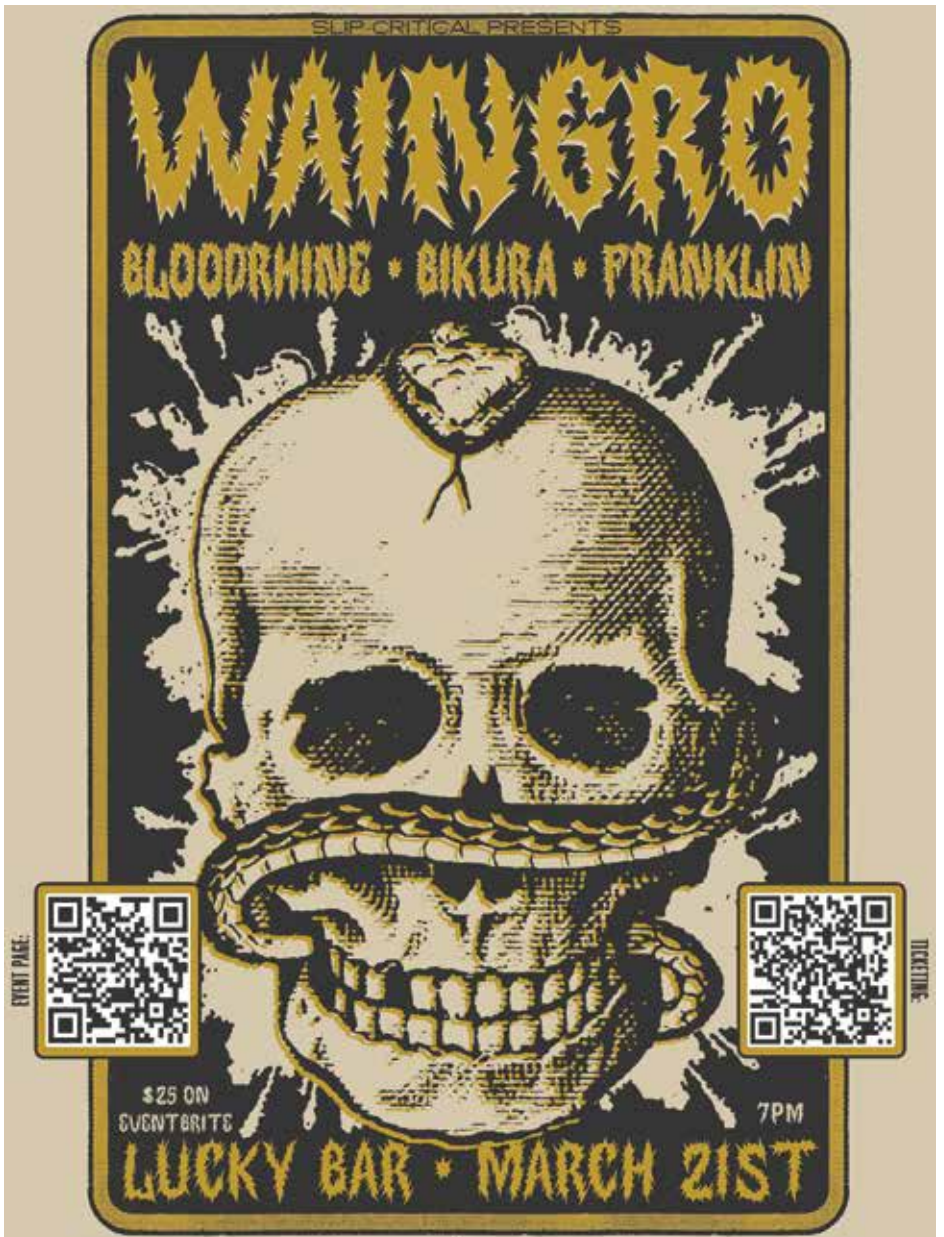
Not really. I'm boring.

AU: How do people find Orka Skateboarding online?

Instagram: @orkaskateboardng

Web: orkaskateboarding.ca

You can also find me at a lot of Vancouver punk shows, you should be there too!





SweetBeast

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

SweetBeast: We're SweetBeast, a psychedelic stoner rock band. We play heavy, low-tuned, melodic music that's all about creating a big, immersive sound. We love blending crushing riffs with hypnotic vibes to take listeners on a journey.

AU: SweetBeast's debut album *Illusions* is out as of Feb 21st. What can you tell us about this record?

SB: *Illusions* is something we're incredibly proud of. It's heavy, it's spacey, and it's full of twists and turns. The album captures a lot of who we are as a band and as people. It's meant to be a journey—both inward and outward—with themes about

perception and how reality can shift depending on how you view it. Each song has its own vibe, but they're all connected in some way.

AU: You're quoted: "*Illusions* is a sonic exploration that invites listeners to journey inward and outward, reflecting the complex relationship between mind, sound, and reality." How do you bring this forward in your songwriting?

SB: It's about creating an atmosphere and letting the music take on its own life. We like to play with contrasts— heavy riffs that give way to quieter, introspective moments, and layers of sound that evolve and shift as you listen. We also leave space for the listener's imagination, so the songs can feel personal to whoever is hearing them. It's all about creating an experience, not just a collection of songs.

AU: Putting together your debut is like giving

birth to your first child. How would you say you've been preparing for this moment so the world can hear it?

SB: It's been a lot of work! We've spent so much time writing, recording, and making sure everything feels right. There's definitely some nervous excitement, but we're ready to let it out into the world. We've also been focusing on how to translate the album's energy into our live performances, which has been a fun challenge.

AU: What is the one stand-out track you think a first-time listener of the band should hear?

SB: "Dream Eater" is a great introduction to what we do. It's got the heaviness, the melodies, and the hypnotic vibe that's central to our sound. If you're into a more sprawling, psychedelic journey, the title track "Illusion" is a must-listen.

AU: You teamed up with Vancouver's Space Queen for your track "Illusion." How did this pair-up come to be?

SB: We've been fans of what Space Queen does for a while, and their unique sound really inspired us. When we were working on "Illusion", it just felt like their ethereal vibe would be a perfect fit for the song. We reached out to them, and it all came together naturally.

AU: For the past six years, SweetBeast has organized a desert rock festival, "Desert North," bringing together 10-15 bands per event to celebrate the heavy, psychedelic sounds of the genre. Is there one planned for 2025?

SB: Right now, we're really focused on the album release and getting it out into the world. Desert North is something we care deeply about, but



we haven't started planning the next one yet. It's definitely something we'll revisit when the time is right.

AU: Any live plans for the band? Touring?

SB: Yes! We're playing our album release show on February 21st in Vancouver, which we're super excited about. After that, we've got a three-show tour planned for early April. Playing live is one of the best parts of what we do, so we're pumped to get out there and share these songs.

AU: Where can people get your merchandise and digital?

SB: You can find our music on all major streaming platforms, and we're working on getting our online merch store up and running soon. For now, merch will be available at our shows. Follow us on social media for updates!

sweetbeast.ca





Zakula

Interview by Mal Content

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Zakula: You're talking to Zakula, a four-piece extreme metal band from Athens, Greece. People probably know us best for our intense and atmospheric music— a mix of death, thrash, and black metal that we've shaped into something uniquely ours. We're also infamous for our raw, high-energy live shows that leave a strong impression.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band and what are you all about?

Zakula: We started back in 2017. In 2021 we put out our first album, a self-titled debut. Honestly, the reception was amazing— both from fans and

Zakula: Our latest album *White Forest Reign Lullabies* just dropped in October. It's a project we're incredibly proud of and represents a significant step forward for us as a band. We've poured everything into this record, and we can't wait for listeners to experience it.

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

Zakula: Definitely. It delves into some heavy and emotional themes— both personal and societal. There's chaos, fear, destruction, and a lot about inner struggles and the fight to overcome them. Some songs explore dystopian ideas, looking at humanity's small place in the universe or the harsh realities of modern life.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

Zakula: Every track on the album holds a special place for us, so it's really hard to single one out right now. They're all so new and full of energy that we're equally excited about each one. Maybe with time, one will naturally stand out, but for now, we're just enjoying the whole journey.

AU: Any other bands from Athens people should check out?

Zakula: The Athens scene is packed with talent. There are so many amazing bands here, we'd rather not name any specific ones because we'd definitely leave someone out. But seriously, dive into the Greek underground scene— you'll find incredible music everywhere.

AU: Anything else you'd like to mention?

Zakula: We really want people to experience the album as a whole. *White Forest Reign Lullabies*



critics. The lineup is Paschalis Christofilos on vocals, Psymon and Socos on guitars, and Dinos Xarchakos on drums. No bass in our setup! We're all veterans of the Greek music scene, with a long history of being involved in a wide range of projects over the years. Our goal has always been to create music that strikes the perfect balance between raw aggression and artistic depth.

AU: What's the scene in Athens, Greece like?

Zakula: Oh, the Athens scene is awesome. You'll find everything from traditional heavy metal to extreme subgenres here. Athens has also become a hub for international tours, so the scene is constantly growing and evolving.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Zakula: Our sound's rooted in extreme metal, for sure. It's got the raw aggression of death and thrash metal, but we also bring in black metal's atmospheric and darker vibes. With *White Forest Reign Lullabies*, we've evolved to embrace darker melodies and dystopian textures, creating a chaotic yet cohesive soundscape.

AU: What can you tell us about your new album?

is meant to be immersive, so throw on some headphones and let it take you on a journey. Right now, we're also gearing up for some live shows here in Greece, and we can't wait to bring this music to life on stage.

AU: Any plans to tour Canada?

Zakula: We would absolutely love to tour Canada! Greece is, of course, quite far from Canada, and we understand that it might be a bit challenging for now. However, we're always open to proposals, and who knows? With the right opportunity, we might just make it happen!

AU: Final words for our readers?

Zakula: Thanks so much for checking us out! Step into the White Forest and let the madness take over. We hope to see you on the road soon!

Facebook: ZakulaBand

IG: @zakula.band

zakula.bandcamp.com

You can also find Zakula on Spotify, Apple Music, and other services.

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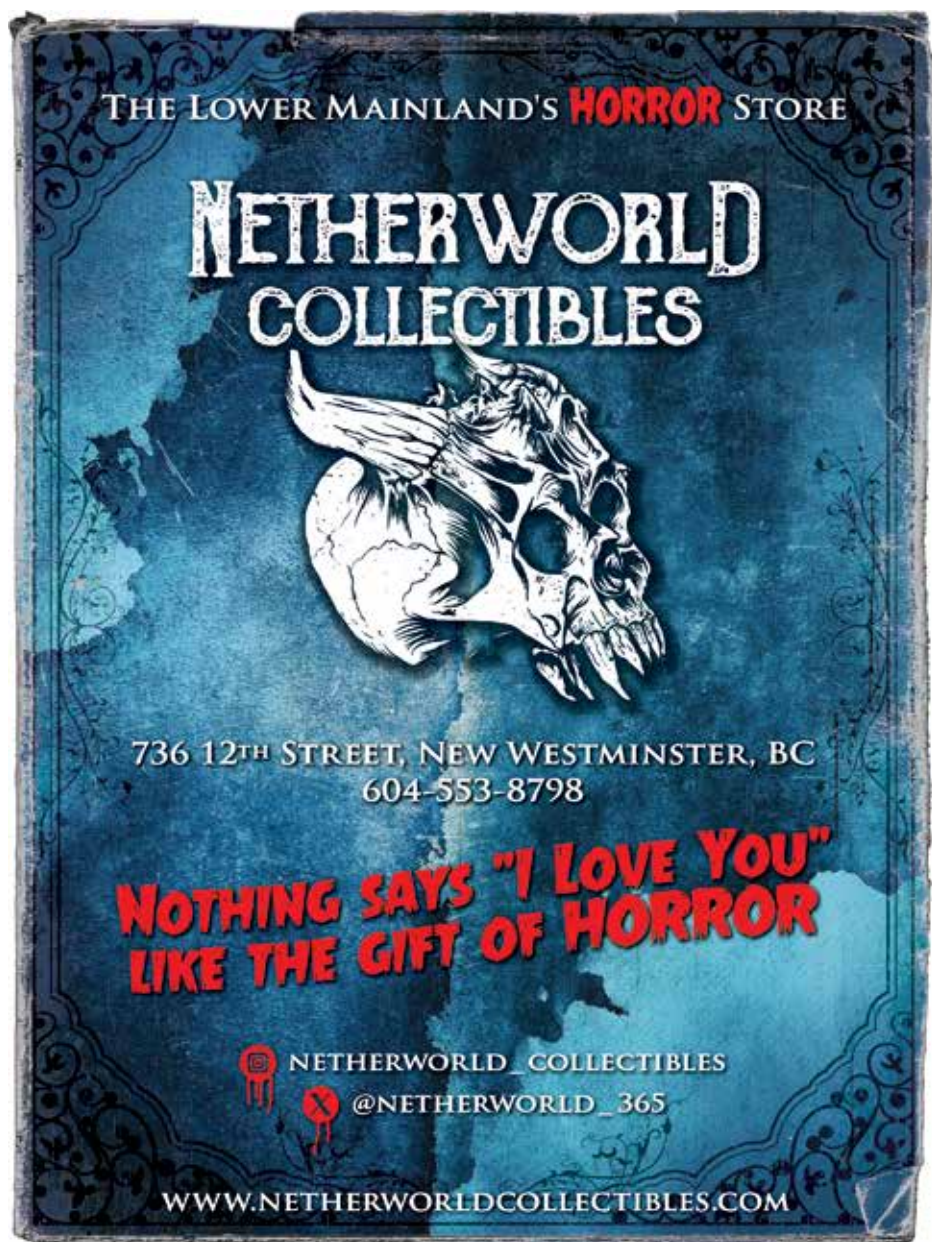
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Interview by Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Ape War: Ape War! We're known for super rowdy yet super fun and non-pretentious live shows.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

Dylan: Vancouver. The culture has shifted in recent years to a more inclusive and open-minded environment which is amazing.

Jonny: Here too, people at our shows actually express emotion, dance hard, but don't try to hurt anyone, look out for each-other.

Matt: Yeah, I feel like the scene in Vancouver is the healthiest it's been in years.

AU: What was your first introduction to music you knew your parents didn't want you listening to?

Dylan/Dan/Joe: Our parents let me do whatever I wanted for better or worse, either unaware or didn't care.

Jonny: We had to stay at a motel last minute and my folks (they're turbo relig, don't drink, never been in a bar or a live rock show,) didn't know it was super rowdy and sketchy. We had to walk through the bar to get to our room, crossing right in front of the band, who were playing "Sharp Dressed Man" so loud and sweaty. I was maybe 8 years old? The look of absolute terror in my folks made me know

this was my path!

AU: How did you the band get started originally?

Dan: When I joined the band, three original members quit within a couple months. I guess I emit a foul and unpleasant odour. Then Matt, Joe, and eventually Dylan signed on and all is right with Ape War.

Jonny: Ha! It was kids, commitment issues, and writing differences, not your unholy odour that gutted that lineup! Ape War is a bit of a Ship of Theseus. Even though almost everyone has changed, we're all on the same page as far as

knowing what an Ape War song is like. It's magic, really.

AU: Describe your sound and live show if possible.

Dan: Chaos/barely holding it together, but fun as hell.

Matt: A chaotic ensemble of metal and hardcore trying not to careen off the rails, and the live show is exactly that with our front ape stalking the dancefloor and demanding participation.

AU: How do you

approach writing music?

Dylan: Very laid-back, fun songwriting sessions where everyone's ideas are considered. We just like to write songs and don't take things too seriously.

Dan: We all have different tendencies and bring ideas, but the magic happens when the band kicks a concept around a bit and "Ape War-i-fies" it.

Matt: Everyone contributes riffs, ideas, structure, inspiration, and occasionally a whole song, just once introduced it's going to be injected with all our disparate DNA and it's going to get fucking dumb.

Jonny: Create surprises. No rules.

AU: If you could hire anyone to do your album art, who would you pick?

Dylan: Chris Cunningham.

Dan: Rick Froberg (RIP).

Matt: Eric Powell.

Jonny: So many great local artists...

AU: Tell us about the latest album you have released. What can we expect to hear? Any stand-out tracks you are extra stoked on?

Dylan: Our most recent release is *Foul and Bereft of Insight*, which we put a lot of work into. My personal favourite track is "A Futile Mistake", which is funny because it started out as my least favourite one.

Dan: I'm stoked on 'em all. Can't wait to write more and get weirder.

Matt: You can expect to hear us rage through eight songs in under 19 minutes, offering some surprises, all while making you dumber. There are so many bangers on this album, but I agree, it's "Futile".

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

Matt: March 8th @ GreyLab, lineup TBA soon.

Jonny: We played some wild shows on Van Island last year, so we are formulating another visit there soon.

AU: Best advice you ever received?

Dylan: "Just do it" - Venetian Snares

Dan: "First thought best thought" (Sometimes...)

Matt: Set your goals.



Joe: Get out of your comfort zone.

Jonny: Don't put that in your mouth.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

Dylan: Eat poutine cheese curds.

Dan: Women's Memorial March in the DTES, then eat poutine cheese curds.

Jonny: Get railed.

AU: Any fetishes to share?

Dylan: Brain Rot reels.

Dan: Not working.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Dylan: Meet people with kindness.

Dan: And Punch Nazis in the face.

Joe: Be creative, make tons of art and music, even if it's just for yourself, take chances.

Jonny: I know it's hard to hope right now, try to subject yourself to some goodness.

apewar1.bandcamp.com

IG: @apewarband

ape-war.ca

A Recorded Dawn

Interview by Nick Workman

Absolute Underground: Could you introduce yourself and tell us who's in the band?

Chris: I'm Chris, and I play guitar.

James: James on the drums.

Matt: Matt on bass.

Josh: Josh, I play guitar and do vocals.

AU: How did the band come to be?

Josh: It was a chance encounter. I was selling a guitar on Facebook Marketplace. Chris ended up buying it from me, and we had both just moved here. I moved from Edmonton, and Chris had just moved from Massachusetts. We decided to get together and jam. It took a little while, but we made it happen. We messed around for a couple of months, playing without writing seriously, just having fun.

My friend from Edmonton was here at the time and started playing drums with us, and that's when the early A Recorded Dawn songs started taking shape. It was just Chris and me on guitar, with all the tracks being instrumental and my friend on drums. When he decided not to play anymore, we brought James in. Around that time, Chris and I started writing more seriously. The songs began to take shape with James, and then we found a bass player to fill things out and added vocals.

AU: You label yourselves as a slowcore/emo band. Can you explain what that means and where the crossover lies?

James: It's all rock n' roll.

Josh: Yeah, I think the slowcore label came from playing slow emo music. The stuff we were

making reminded me of this band Love, Claire. If you've heard of them, they're like the perfect crossover between emo and slowcore. Especially when I started working on the vocals, combining spoken word parts with screaming parts, I thought the spoken word felt very slowcore, while the screaming felt very emo.

There's also a big influence from the band Human Hands from the UK. They're the perfect example of that genre hybrid. Labelling ourselves this way helps manage expectations. We're not fully slowcore, so we don't want people to think the shows will all be slow, quiet, and pretty. But we're also not just emo. We don't want people to think it's going to be mosh music. It's important to let people know there's a bit of everything in our music.

AU: Who influences your sound, both contemporary and in the past?

Chris: In terms of similar bands, I wasn't listening to much emo or slowcore before playing with Josh. I was into Horse Jumper of Love and bands like that. But since we started playing together, I've been listening to Hum, a huge influence, and

getting suggestions from Josh. I also used to listen to a lot of post-hardcore and hardcore, which has started creeping into our songwriting as we evolve.

Matt: I always liked Mike Watt. I'm a huge fan of rhythmic bass playing. This style is a learning curve for me, though. I've never played bass like this before.

James: Honestly, I'm not pulling inspiration from anything specific. I played punk rock for years, just bashing out beats. It's nice to do something different now. I'm just going with how it feels and sounds.

Josh: For the early stuff, it was bands like Hum and Human Hands. Now, it's a lot of contemporary screamo bands like Ostraca, Suis La Lune, and A Paramount, A Love Supreme. It's cool to chase

a sound you have in mind, but if you focus too hard, you'll let yourself down. Let it grow naturally and see where it goes.

AU: Vancouver Island and many other places have seen a revival in emo music. Why here and why now?

Josh: I think emo's resurgence comes from younger kids, like 16 to 19-year-olds. Around



2017-2018, emo and screamo started appearing in skate videos and other action sports media. Then with TikTok, more kids got exposed to it. Emo has always been around, but now it's bigger than ever, partly thanks to the internet and the right people pushing it forward.

As for Vancouver Island, I'm not sure. I hope more emo bands start up here. The younger generation is getting into it now, so I'm praying that, in a few years, there will be a bunch of kids making screamo bands.

AU: The term 'shoegazing' came from band members looking at their feet or pedalboards while playing. You play with your back to the

audience; why do you do this, and should we call it wall-gazing?

Matt: I love "wall-gazing." That's awesome.

Josh: The back-to-the-audience thing came from watching screamo bands back in the day. I've always hated performative musicians, the kind of people who are like, "Look at me! Look how weird I am!" I just want people to focus on the music and nothing else.

Chris: It also sounds better when we play this way because we practice in a tiny room, all facing each other. None of us are traditionally trained, so we need to work together to make it sound good live.

AU: What's next for A Recorded Dawn?

Josh: We've been writing a lot. We have two songs finished as a band and five or six more in the works. Our goal is to have a full LP recorded by the end of the year.

AU: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

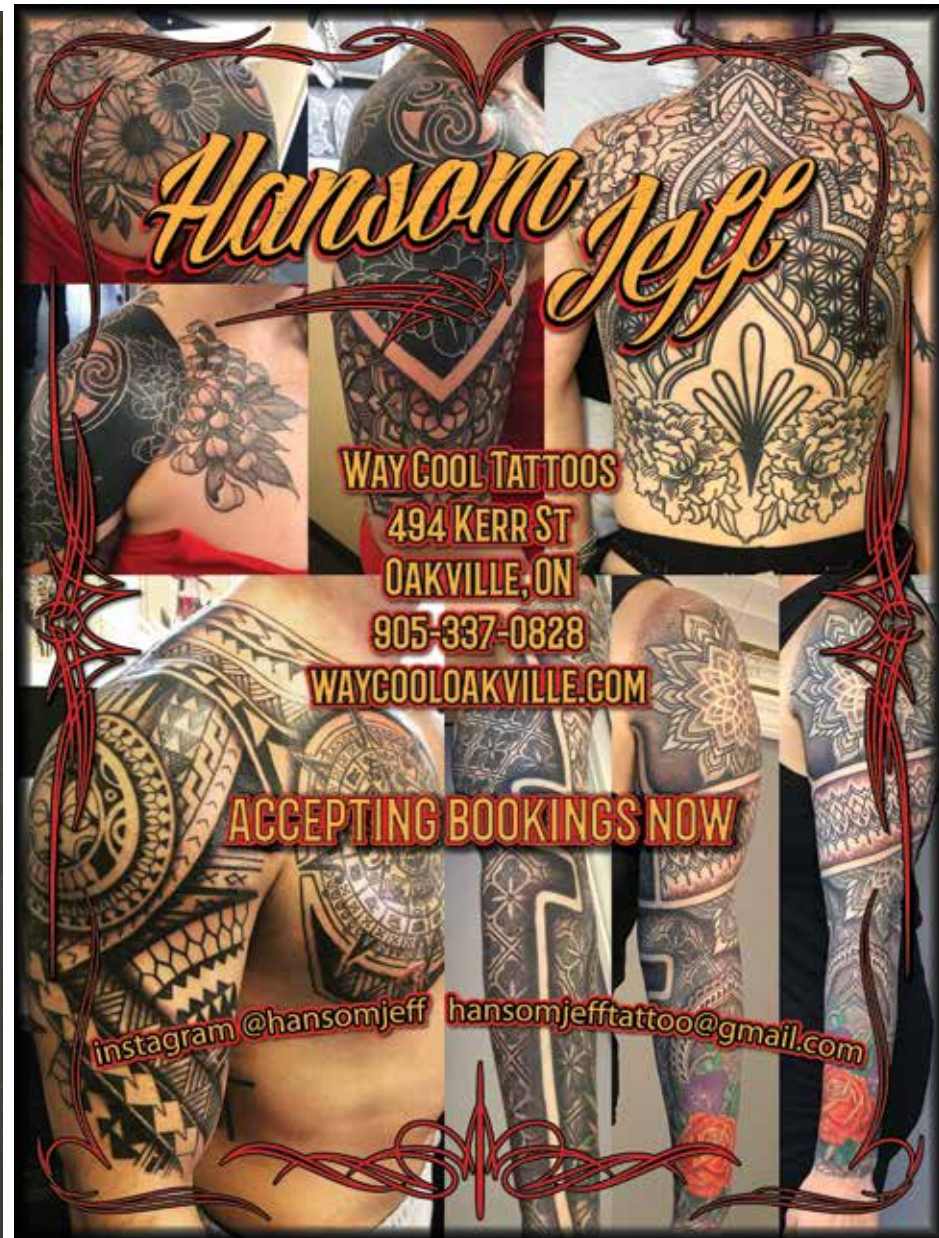
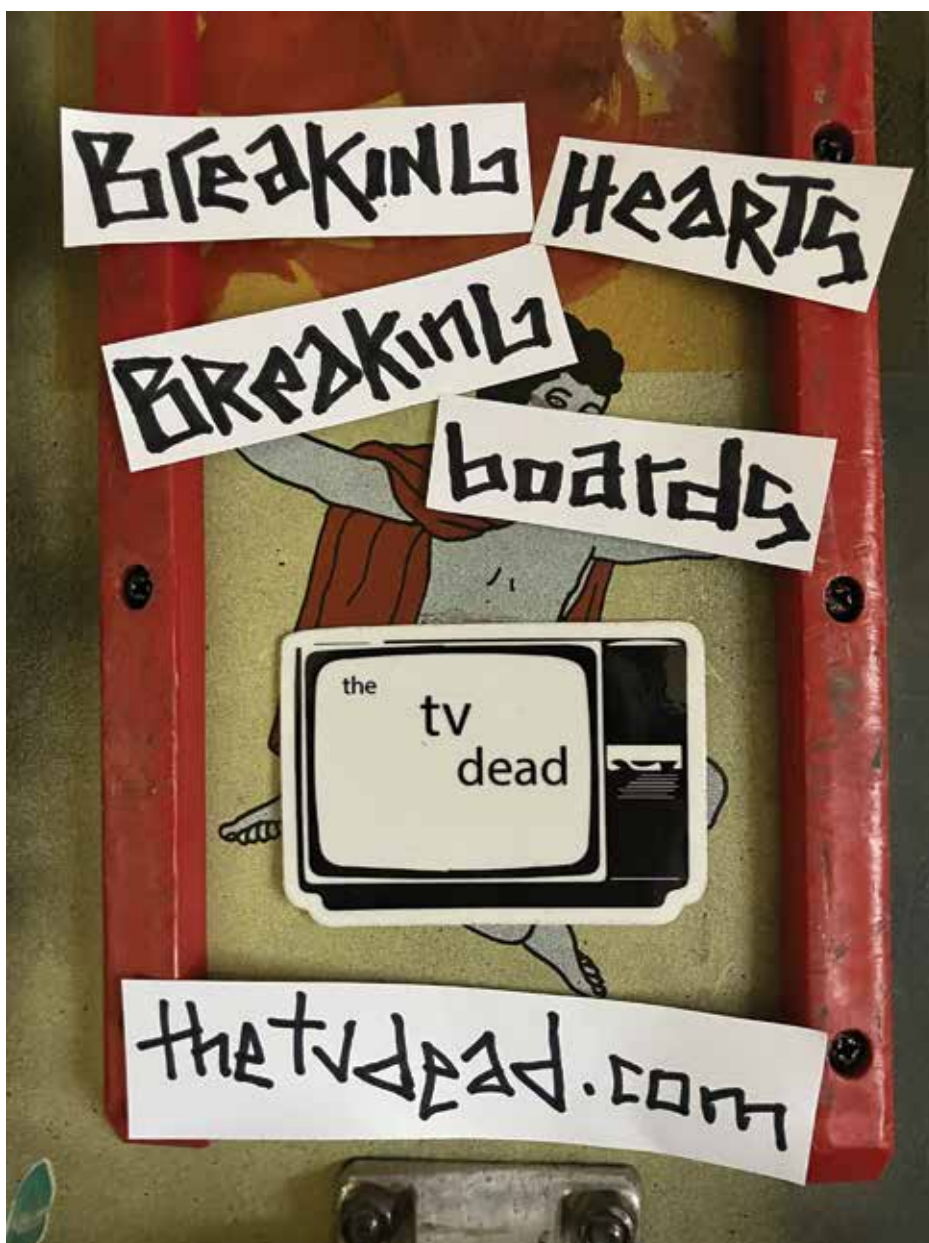
Josh: Shout out to Gabe, Max and Lauren from Near Dark, Troy Lemberg, i.o, Coup d'état, Black Treacle, Bathtub Autopsy, Deathmakesstardust, Mourn Recif, Archivists, and Dreamworld Panic.

Matt: Shout out to Shoplifter and Cherry Venom.

Chris: Shout out to Josh. He's the greatest organizer, administrator, and communicator. This band wouldn't have come together without him.

James: Shout out to Zach, the tattoo artist who first linked us up. I got tatted by him, and he mentioned Josh was looking for a drummer. We exchanged texts a couple of times but didn't connect until later. Eventually, I met Josh through Matt, and the rest is history.

a-recorded-dawn.bandcamp.com





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IMAGINE NINA HAGEN AND LEMMY BACKED BY PUBLIC ENEMY'S DRUM MACHINE ON A HEAVY METAL-MEETS-TECHNO ACID TRIP. NANAIMO BC'S CAVEMAN & THE BANSHEE HAVE BEEN BLOWING UP STAGES ACROSS CANADA SINCE LATE 2021 WITH THEIR LETHAL PSYCHEDELIC ELECTRO PUNK -MEETS- PERFORMANCE ART LIVE SHOWS.

CO-PRODUCED BY ROB THE VIKING (BC HIP HOP LEGEND/SWOLLEN MEMBERS ETC) AND FEATURING SPECIAL GUESTS LORI GOLDSTON ON CELLO (NIRVANA UNPLUGGED) AND THE THEREMIN MAN AKA STEPHEN HAMM (SLOW/TANKHOG/EVAPORATORS) ON, WELL, THEREMIN, THE NEW ALBUM INCLUDES 7 ORIGINAL TRACKS OF RIFF-HEAVY CAVEMAN BASS LINES AND WAILING BANSHEE VOCALS OVER TOP OF CLASSIC DRUM MACHINE BLOCK-ROCKIN' BEATS ALONGSIDE A COVER VERSION OF 1964 POP'S 1980 CLASSIC "I'M BORED".

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VINYL * CASSETTE * COMPACT DISC
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HYPERSPACE METALFEST 2025
ABOUT THE BANDS

Enforcer



Sweden’s Enforcer is by far the biggest and most influential heavy metal band of the 2000s. Formed in 2005, the band went against all trends as a larger-than-life-styled heavy metal band for the masses, in a world of metalcore and plastic power metal. Quickly gaining success in the underground, Enforcer released their two first albums 2008-2010 and created a huge worldwide movement of traditional metal, later to be referred to as ‘new wave of traditional metal.’ 2012 Enforcer signed a worldwide deal with metal giants Nuclear Blast and put out another three albums. Today, Enforcer is one of the most renowned heavy metal band of its generation and has toured the world countless of times with their furious and uncompromising heavy metal leading the way for generations to come.

Psychostick



Psychostick is an American comedy metalcore band from Tempe, Arizona, known for their comical image and usage of humor in their songs and lyrics. Their style is referred to by themselves and some online album review sites as “humorcore”. Making their very first Vancouver appearance at Hyperspace this year, who knows what antics they’ll get up to as they warm up the crowd for the mighty Enforcer!

Crimson Shadows



Crimson Shadows is a Toronto-based metal band that combines the guttural screams and blast beats of death metal with the epic up-tempo guitar harmonies and choruses of power metal. This will be Crimson Shadows’ first time in Vancouver since 2019’s Hyperspace 2. With a new EP titled *The Resurrection* and two new singles “Guardians” and “Dawn Of An Age”, they are ready to do battle at the Rickshaw Theatre on April 12th!

Owlbear

Owlbear was formed in 2017 in Portland, Oregon, by a group of friends who shared a passion for both heavy metal and tabletop role-playing games. Their shared love for Dungeons & Dragons, particularly the creature known as the owlbear, inspired the band’s name and thematic direction. From the outset, Owlbear sought to create music that was not only heavy but also rich in narrative and atmosphere. Their early rehearsals and songwriting sessions often

revolved around storytelling, with each song crafted to evoke a particular scene or character from their imagined fantasy worlds. Owlbear’s first appearance in Vancouver will be on day three at the Rickshaw Theatre!

Luminator

Luminator is a fantasy power metal band based in Seattle. Their debut EP *On The Clouds* was released in 2022 and more new material is due later this year. Their high-energy uplifting sound is sure to kick off night three of Hyperspace with force!

Greyhawk



Greyhawk stepped in at the last minute to headline night two of Hyperspace this year. Making their third appearance at Hyperspace, new singer Anthony Corso is ready to bring the power with what is sure to be their best performance at Hyperspace yet! Anyone that has seen this traditional heavy metal titan before knows that they are in for an incredible set. Their newest album *Thunderheart* released in 2024 has been making waves across the heavy metal and power metal scenes worldwide.

Lunar



After 10 years and four albums, Lunar will be playing their very first live show ever on night two at The Cobalt! Their eclectic mix of styles will leave any fan of progressive metal entertained. Led by Alex Bosson, who has graced the Hyperspace stage on multiple occasions before, Lunar will be celebrating the release of their fourth album “Tempora Mutantur” available on all platforms January 31st!

Solarus

Based in London Ontario, Solarus have been tearing it up since 2015. If you like soaring vocals, powerful melodies and orchestrations, and heavy 7-string guitar riffs, you won’t want to miss this set. Celebrating their first appearance in Vancouver, we are very excited to be hosting them on night two at The Cobalt!

Tylor Dory Trio

Having to cancel their performance last year, Tylor Dory Trio are set to redeem themselves on night two of Hyperspace this year! Tylor Dory is a progressive metal juggernaut based out of Edmonton that never misses. Their album *Unsought Salvation* is a masterpiece of modern progressive metal. Blending emotion, heaviness, dynamics, and incredible vocals, Tylor Dory Trio will also be performing in Vancouver for the very first time on night two of Hyperspace!

The Astral Prophets

This psychedelic rock/metal band from Calgary is a new addition to the lineup, set to open up night two of Hyperspace this year. Featuring multiple members that have performed at Hyperspace before, these scene veterans know how to

bring the party. Their first Vancouver show will surely be a memorable one, make sure you show up early and show our friends from Calgary some love!

Glyph

Formed in 2022, Glyph were instantly legends in the power metal scene in North America. With multiple familiar faces, their first appearance at Hyperspace will be an epic one! But who’s going to sing for them? Even I don’t know yet, but we know it’s going to be incredible. Their album *Honor. Power. Glory.* is a must-listen for anyone that likes their power metal anthemic, high energy, and full of virtuosity!

Tower Hill

Also performing for the very first time at Hyperspace, Tower Hill are a traditional heavy metal band from Edmonton that has been making a name for themselves across North America. Influenced by bands like Running Wild, Riot, Stormwitch, Helloween, and Judas Priest, they have a familiar sound with a melodic twist. They’ll have you singing along in no time, but make sure to listen to their album *Deathstalker* so you don’t miss a word!

Red Cain

Born out of the vast prairies and snowy peaks of Alberta, Red Cain is a modern progressive metal project with Eastern European roots. With intricate songwriting, powerful vocals, eerie soundscapes and strong electronic-backed groove, Red Cain champion a fluid, dynamic, and unique style centered around telling dark, conceptual Faustian sagas and constructing those into an unforgettable live experience. Making their sophomore appearance at Hyperspace, we can’t wait to welcome back their unique, powerful sound on night one this year!

Serpent Rider

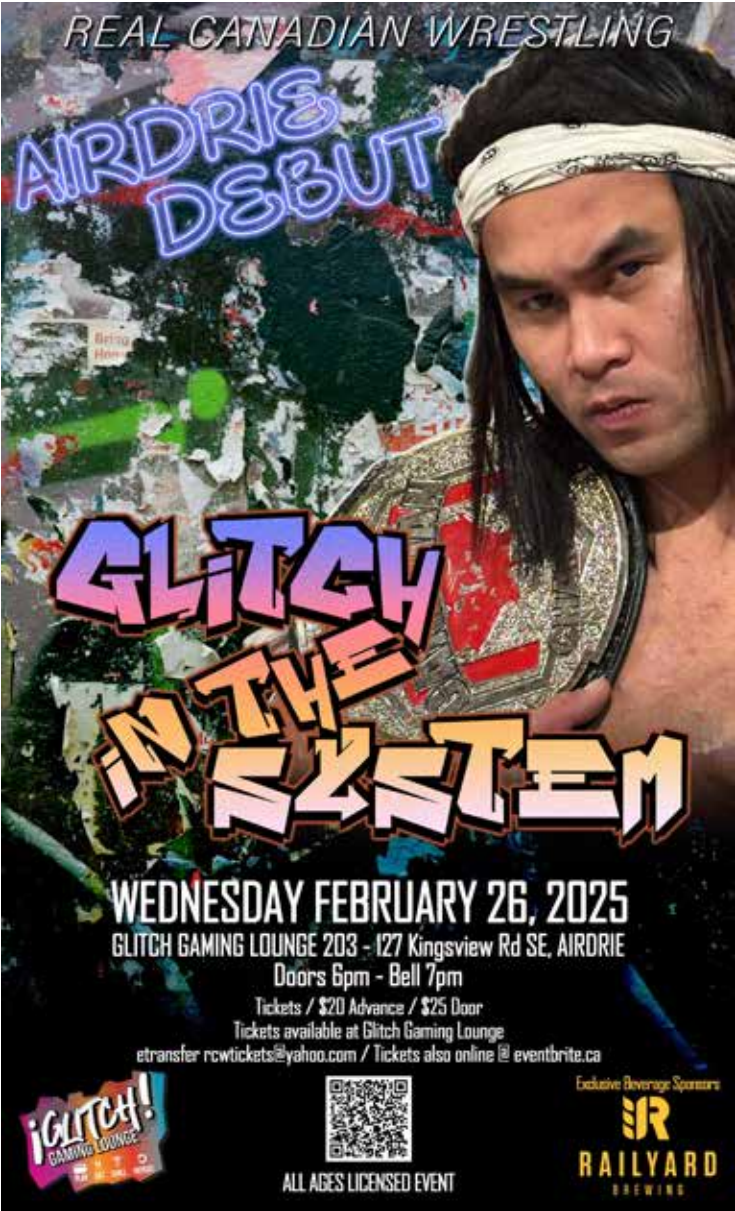
Named after lyrics from Manilla Road’s “The Ram”, Serpent Rider take deep influence from the Road and infuse it with a heavy dose of doom, putting them in company with bands like Doomsword and Old Mother Hell. Serpent Rider are an international band, featuring members from both the USA and Greece. Musicians of the American metal underground have teamed up with Nick Varsamis, the vocalist and lyricist of the mighty Wrathblade, for this foray into the epic.



Cruzer

Singer Eric Willmott is no stranger to the Hyperspace stage. This new project is set to kick off Hyperspace this year with some good ol’ THRASH! With new material coming later this year, it won’t be long before everyone that likes to get a little ‘80s with their thrash knows their name!

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Sacrifice



Sacrifice

By Jason Flower, Erik Lindholm & Ira Hunter

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Rob: It's Rob here. I'm probably most infamous for picking my guitar up by the whammy bar. Trying to not be famous for anything.

AU: Please give us a brief history of Sacrifice if at all possible?

Rob: We first got together sometime around '83 as basically kids and put together our band Sacrifice. The band exploded pretty quickly, as there weren't many bands around like us. Recorded our first demo in '84, and before we knew it, we were recording albums, shooting videos, and playing lots of shows along the way. After our fourth album *Apocalypse Inside*, we broke

up in '93. Fast-forward to 2006, the band got back together for a reunion show here in Toronto and we haven't looked back.

AU: What led to the reunion in 2006 and what did it originally entail?

Rob: Our only plans were to play that one show. I think we were all hoping it went well and somehow we could continue. A promoter here I would see once in a while and he would always ask if we would play again. He actually ended up figuring out a bunch of logistical stuff and we finally did agree. We were all pretty nervous for our first show in 17 years, but it went better than we hoped for.

AU: Today's Sacrifice is the same as the start in the 1980s. In the volatile world of creativity, and music, intersecting with business—can you share with us some key concepts that worked

get on a great tour or not.

AU: Did any bands in particular influence you to start Sacrifice in the first place?

Rob: Venom, Metallica, Exciter, Mercyful Fate. There was this movement of way heavier bands coming up and it felt like the music I was searching for all of my youth. That was the direction we wanted to go.

AU: What did you guys do differently that set you apart from other bands of the time?

Rob: Almost every band here in Toronto was kind of the same—chasing radio play. It was obvious from the first time we were onstage that this was not the road we were on. There was a scene growing of people into what we were doing so it was well-received.

AU: What other metal bands were happening in Canada when you were starting out?

Rob: Exciter and Anvil were the heavy ones back then we were into. There were a lot of more mainstream type metal bands as well that I guess were more hard rock. We would probably go see local hardcore bands more than the local metal bands of the day. Voivod and Razor came out just before we did with great albums we liked.

AU: How do you feel about being referred to as one of the "Big Four" of Canadian thrash metal, along with Voivod, Razor and Annihilator? Was there ever a show where all four bands played?

Rob: It feels great to be recognized like that. Should really be five because Exciter should be in this group. We did have a show in Calgary with us, Razor, Exciter and Annihilator but sadly Voivod couldn't join us.

AU: Do you feel Sacrifice may have influenced other metal bands who came after you guys?

Rob: Oh, for sure. It's great for us to hear that from other bands. Bigger bands or small bands it always means a lot to us to hear that. Bands have covered our songs many times and we love to hear their take on our songs.

AU: Did you ever feel being from Canada hindered the band in any way?

Rob: Other people have suggested that, but we don't feel that way. Especially in the '80s, it felt like we had the whole country behind us. Canada has always been ultra supportive for Sacrifice and honestly it feels different for us here. This massive, sparsely populated country is home.

AU: What are some career highlights to date?

Rob: Playing a couple shows with Motörhead was amazing. No Speed Limit festival in Montreal was the first festival type thing we ever did— that was memorable. Any time we have ever been in a recording studio was great. Opening for Slayer in our hometown in '86 was incredible. Getting back together for our reunion show in Toronto after 17 years and the last time we played Toronto to a sold-out Opera House were both special. Every time we get onstage now feels that way, we feel extremely thankful that we are still able to do



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Victoria, BC, Canada
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— Matt Ramsey, Victoria News, 1999

SE51

DERANGED
Lacerations
12" LP | 1988-89
Ferocious Deaththrash
Victoria/Langford, BC, Canada

NEW!

SE56

SACRED BLADE
Of The Sun + Moon
12" LP | 1986
Progressive, sci-fi power metal
Vancouver, BC, Canada

NEW!

SE53

MORAL DECAY
To Build An End
12" LP | 1989
Thrash Metal
Victoria, BC, Canada

SE47

DISTORTED INFLUENCE
Cold
12" LP | 1992
Crossover Thrash
Victoria, BC, Canada

SE41

THE DISHRAGS
Four
12" LP | 1980
Punk / Hardcore
Vancouver, BC, Canada

SE45

AS SHERIFF
Six Ways To The Ace
12" LP | 1969-70
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Victoria, BC, Canada

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this. Recording *Volume Six* is right up there with all these memories. Not sure if we have ever been this proud of a record.

AU: What can you tell us about your latest album *Volume Six*. Does it explore any particular themes or subjects? When does it officially come out?

Rob: It's an apocalyptic record. One theme that seems to be consistent is that the world seems to have taken a dark turn and it's becoming difficult to be optimistic about the future. Musically, you will recognize it as Sacrifice immediately. It's fast, powerful aggression throughout. Even on the slower parts. I'm not good with hyping this up, I'd rather everyone hear it and decide. I will say if you are into Sacrifice you will not be disappointed. February 21, 2025.

AU: The album has some great twists and turns, the energy stays maxed out. The leads are intense and awesome. Can you share with us some inspirations in your writing process? What drove you to release these songs now? You've had a while to cook on it, with the last



Photo Credit: Eric Hvid

Sacrifice studio recording, say, 2009.

Rob: I write a lot at home but I think the catalyst was writing "Comatose" and "Missile" and it felt like we would move forward from there. Our inspiration comes from within and our influences have pretty much remained the same from when we started. When we play live it feels like most people want to hear stuff from our first three records. It isn't necessary for Sacrifice to release an album in 2025. The only reason for us to do this is a bunch of songs felt really good to us and we wanted everyone to hear them.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you're stoked on?

Rob: "Comatose" is probably my favourite. "Black Hashish" I can listen to anytime. "Underneath Millennia" is

really fun to play. I'm happy with the entire album. It feels consistently intense for me.

AU: "Comatose" speaks to drug problems in Vancouver (and of course, elsewhere in Canada and the world). Is there any perspective you can share or offer, to those living in, or with addiction right now?

Rob: Seeing the area around the Rickshaw does affect me. I think most people have had some connection to addiction in a direct or indirect way. All I can offer is that somewhere, someone does care about you. This can be equally hard on family and friends as it can be for someone suffering addiction. It's a hard battle to fight but if you seek it out, there are people that will help you fight the circumstances that brought you to the dark place you are now.

AU: How do you go about songwriting and rehearsing, while living so far apart from your incredible drummer Gus Pynn?

Rob: Thankfully, Gus and myself live close enough to each other that we can rehearse on a fairly regular basis. When we play live, we all usually get in a couple of days early so we can get a few good rehearsals in and tighten up.

AU: How did you come to be on Cursed Blessings Records and what do they bring to the table?

Rob: We liked what they have been doing and we've known Al Nolan for a long time and there is trust there. This is pretty special for him to be releasing a Sacrifice studio album. There was no

interest from us in signing with one of the bigger labels. This is where we want to be.

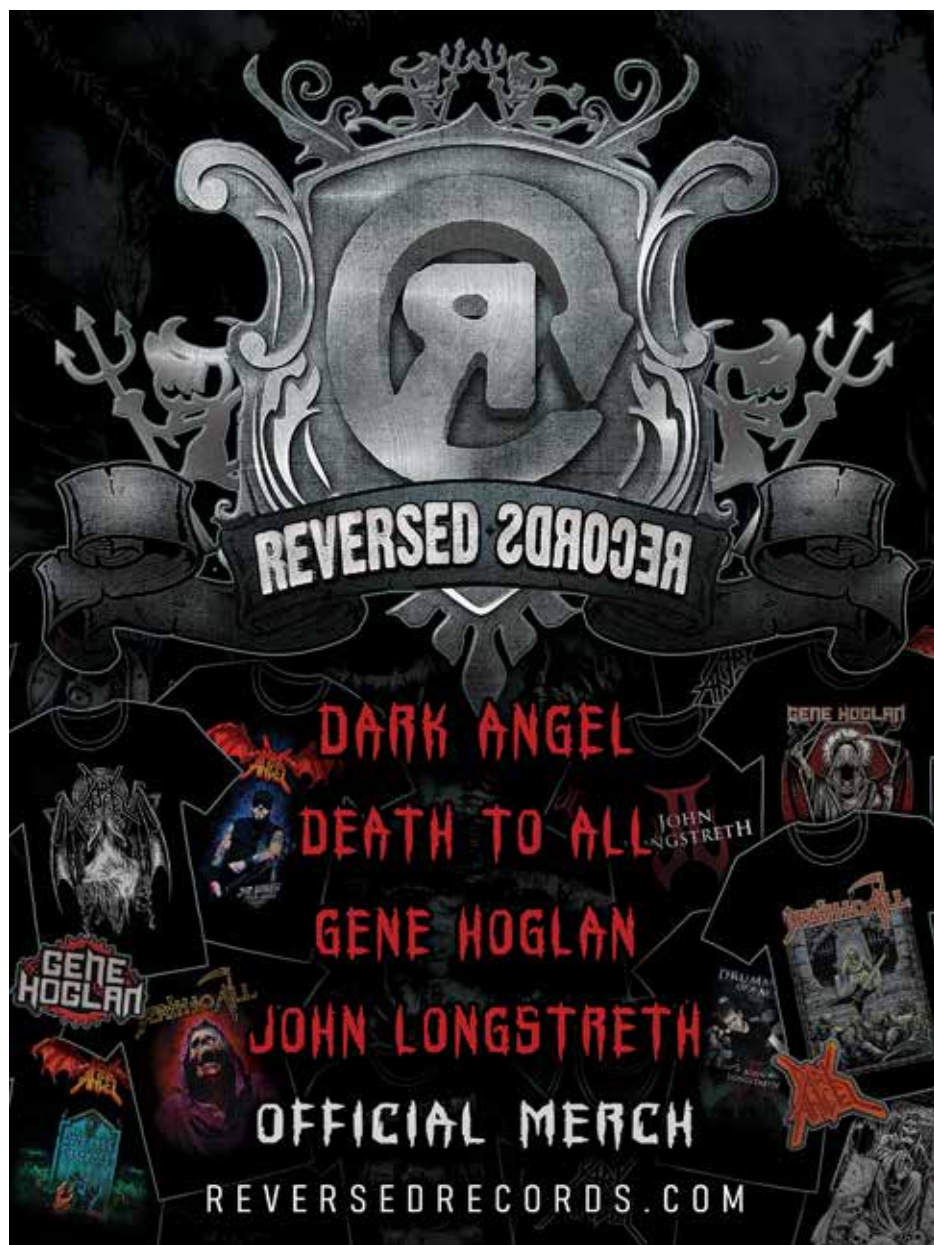
AU: From your debut album, all the way up to the new one, you've always had extraordinary artwork often unique to the genre which you play within. This doesn't happen by accident, but instead with careful consideration. Please tell us something special about each cover artist and the art itself.

Rob: *Torment In Fire:* I believe the artist's name is Al Warnock, I could be wrong. Probably my least favourite of our album covers but at the same time it's kind of a time capsule that says "This is an underground metal album from 1985." There is no mistaking what kind of music is on these vinyl grooves.

Forward to Termination: This is the same artist from our first album. The original album cover was pretty large and was

more rectangular than square. We liked it, but the record company felt it was more effective to take elements from that and turn it into a sort of collage that I personally wasn't as into. The original artwork was lost in a fire, so any hope of seeing it again is gone. It totally looks like a thrash metal album though.





Soldiers of Misfortune: Not sure who did this cover, but the high-contrast soldier is simple and effective for me. This is our cover that translates the best to a T-shirt.

Apocalypse Inside: This is the cover of ours that is the least translatable to T-shirt. Can't remember the artist, but Metal Blade shared some art with us and we picked that one. Dali-esque surrealism.

The Ones I Condemn: Again, I can't remember the name of the artist, but he is a body paint artist and I asked that he try to capture the model looking aloof, or with some kind of arrogance. Some do not realize that this is a photograph. I really like this cover.

Volume Six: I absolutely can tell you the artist of this one. Todd Kowalski of Propagandhi worked hard on this one. We have always liked Todd's artwork and I suggested asking him. Thankfully he was fully into it and produced, I think we can all agree, our best album cover. We gave him the music, lyrics and no direction. I was more into letting him interpret and he gifted the metal world this striking piece of artwork that tells you what fury is about to be unleashed.

AU: Do you have any hidden/forgotten demo tapes that could still be unleashed upon the masses?

Rob: All the old demos have been released previously, so no. There is a considerable amount

of demo material out there, though.

AU: Back in the days of MuchMusic and MTV, what music videos did Sacrifice release and did it help the band gain more fans?

Rob: Oh for sure. Getting on TV back then exposed you to people that weren't really exposed to this kind of music. I remember doing our first video thinking who the fuck is going to put a band like us on TV? Next thing I knew, MuchMusic is using "Re-Animation" for the intro to the metal show.

AU: What can you tell us about when Sacrifice opened for Slayer's Reign in Blood tour in 1986?

Rob: We just finished writing "Re-Animation" and decided to play it that night, if I'm not mistaken. There were always stories of bands getting booed off opening for Slayer. We were already well-known in Toronto back then and we could almost feel the crowd was proud of us, here is our local band up with Slayer. People still talk about that show here today.

AU: Is the song "Re-Animation" based on a particular horror movie by chance?

Rob: You'll never guess which one, haha.

AU: There are photographs of you guys having met with Sacrifice (Japan), whom date back as far as you guys with similar influences.

Rob: One time in Osaka, someone introduced

us and we said "Let's take a picture." It's one of those things like when Prometheus introduced fire all around the world at the same time. Here are two bands on opposite sides of the planet with almost the same logo, same influences and even kind of look the same.

AU: Tell us about this meeting and what you think of the band?

Rob: I can't say I am familiar with their music but I have heard in the past, from what I remember it was kind of like Venom? The meeting wasn't long, it was more like an introduction, "Kanpai," and "Let's take a picture."

AU: What do you recall about when Sacrifice played in Nanaimo, BC at the Acme Pipe Co. indoor skatepark? I still tell people it was the most killer metal show to ever hit Vancouver Island.



Rob: Legendary. I remember it being hard to concentrate on playing because people were shredding right in front of us while we were playing. Even taking the ferry across was memorable. The island is a beautiful part of the country.

AU: At that show, you guys played with two legendary punk bands: Death Sentence and Dayglo Abortions. Was that normal for metal and punk bands to play

together back then?

Rob: By the time that show happened I feel like it was pretty normal. At first, I guess we wondered how we would be received, but it was always good. It seemed like metal bands were getting faster and the punk bands were playing more metal-style riffs. That show, we were all into each other's bands.

Sacrifice

AU: Do you remember what album you were touring when you played Nanaimo? Was it Forward To Termination?

Rob: I'm pretty sure it was, yes.

AU: Is there a tour lineup that you've dreamed of making happen? What would it look like? Where would you go?

Rob: Razor is an obvious choice for us, since we have played with Dave and Bob so many times and we have nothing but mutual respect. The truth is though, that Sacrifice is not our full-time gig, and it is very unlikely to happen. I'd like to see more of Asia and go back to Japan. Anywhere that we haven't been before is good, and places we've played are good as well.

AU: Any tour plans to promote the new album?

Rob: We will most likely just do one-off shows. If we do tour anywhere, it will be a very short one. We are planning to play a bit more this year though.

AU: Any big festivals in Europe planned for this summer? How is the reception overseas?

Rob: Nothing confirmed yet. We do get offers to play Europe, but it's pretty difficult to make it work financially there. The European reviews for the new album have been overwhelmingly extremely positive, so I hope our fortunes change with booking festivals.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans.

Rob: We just want to express our gratitude for keeping Sacrifice alive for 40 years. We've made lots of memories right across Canada that will always be with us. We hope everyone will enjoy the album and we will see you all soon.

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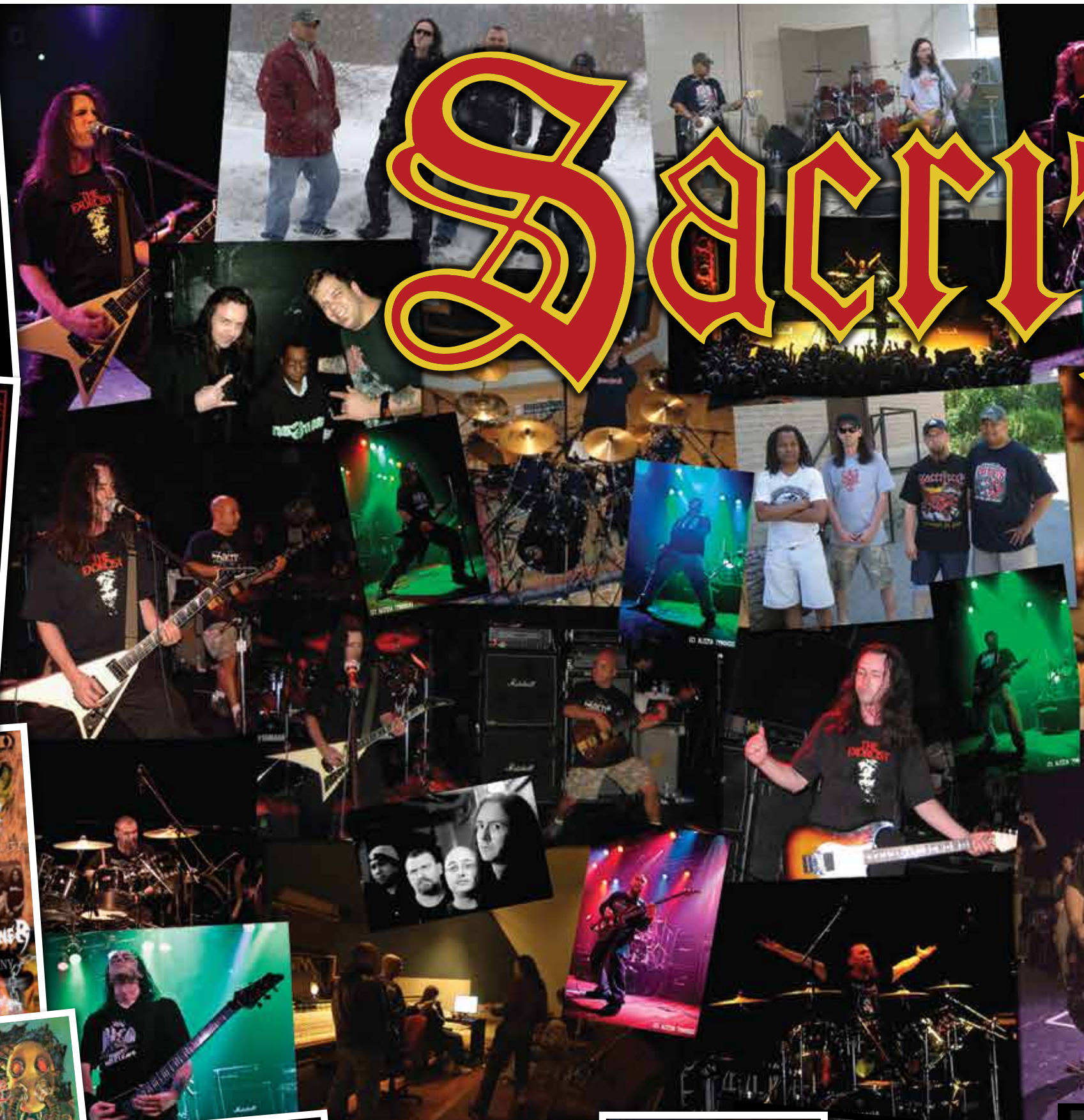
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Sacrifice

Forward To Testimonials



"[My top three favourite thrash albums?] The first one is from Canada, SACRIFICE 'Forward To Termination'. Amazing record. I played it so much when I was a teenager in Brazil."

- Max Cavallera, SOULFLY, ex-SEPULTURA

"Sacrifice were the band that we looked up to growing up. They did it making music that crushed all in their path. I still fill up with pride when I see their name dropped by other bands or when someone is wearing their t-shirt."

- Danko Jones, DANKO JONES



"It's hard to explain why and what Sacrifice means to me. They are that one band in your life that from the moment you hear them, they bring you happiness. Then becoming friends back in the day made it even more cool. Skipping school to buy their music on release day, seeing them live every chance I get, jam sessions and just hanging out have been some of the best times. I truly wish everyone had that one band that did this for you."

- Robin Dudley

"To be honest, I'm not even much of a thrash guy. I never had a huge thrash phase; I went from progressive metal like Tool to Lamb Of God then straight into death metal and black metal. And most thrash I hear is good, but lacking something... Then I turn on Sacrifice and it's completely different. The blood is pumping, teeth grinding and fist clenched punching the fucking air along to their sick ass riffs, wild solos and overall ripping energy. Sacrifice is a band that gives thrash the absolute BALLS that a lot of other bands just simply lack in my opinion, and if more bands sounded like them I would be a huge fan of the genre. Absolutely essential band. And on a last note, I pretty much never go in a mosh pit out of fear of accidentally getting hurt, but when I saw Sacrifice at Maryland Deathfest last year, I crowd-surfed twice and had a fucking blast. Can't wait to see them again, hopefully in Toronto next!"

- Ryan Mueller



"Their music is nostalgic to me. Every time I push play, I am taken back to great times, and I smile. This new album already feels no different. These dudes rule!"

- Roland Gorge



"Sacrifice fucking rips" - Angelica Ramirez



"I can't count how many times I've seen Sacrifice play over the years. There was one night in Peterborough however that was a legendary moment in time. The band has just released their debut 'Torment In Fire' album in January. It was 1986. The birth of thrash metal was evolving and those that were at the show that night were witnessing one of Canada's top thrash bands at the beginning of their career. The weekend just prior to this show Sacrifice had just opened for Megadeth and King Diamond [July 25, 1986] at the Coronet in Kitchener. To put things in context a little, at the time both King Diamond and Megadeth had only released one album each. Slayer just had two albums in their discography. It was still very early in the thrash metal scene. Sacrifice showed up late. There was some time between the Aggressor and Sacrifice sets where many of us wondered if it was really going to happen. Everyone was relieved when they finally showed up. As usual Sacrifice was tight and played some brutal speed metal off the recently released album as well as a couple of new songs. They even threw in a cover of 'The Possibility of Life's Destruction' by the English hardcore punk band Discharge. The crowd was somewhat small yet packed by typical Peterborough standards. It was very hot in the basement of that old hall on Water Street. I can still remember the steam in the room coming off the sweaty rockers gathered that night. All of us were good friends and we were having an enthusiastic moshing time. It was the beginning of something musically huge and we all knew it."

The following year Sacrifice released their second album 'Forward To Termination'. If you have really good eyesight and look really hard at the credits on the inner sleeve. 'Thanks to all the Toronto; Montreal; Quebec and Peterborough thrashers' Our scene was so proud that our town had been mentioned. It was a badge of honor for us"

- Tony Cosgrey

"I had just started buying CD's in late 1990 early 1991, and our local music store had a small used CD section. I hadn't found anything in there that caught my attention until one day I happened upon a used copy of Soldiers of Misfortune. I hadn't heard of SACRIFICE before but the cover

was simple and to the point and it was on METAL BLADE, which I knew from the early SLAYER albums. With song titles like "As the World Burns", "A Storm in the Silence" & the title track, it seemed like a good addition to my small collection which at that point included "Rust in Peace", "Seasons in the Abyss" & "Souls of Black". This album, by a band I didn't know anything about, showed me just because it's in the used bin, doesn't mean that it's junk. Sometimes you find a diamond in the rough."

- John Sutphen



"In the early '80s my family moved from Canada to West Germany because my father was Air Force. In '84 I was Ten years old and hadn't discovered much in the way of music. We had a Walkman and a couple of Country music tapes, ABBA etc. And on the Base in Germany, before the Internet, I was culturally isolated from both North America and Europe since I don't Sprecken ze Deutch y'know? So four years passed and I had heard some Bob Seger, Eagles, etc. on the CBC radio, and I got a cassette of Blizzard of Ozz in '86 on a visit to the American Base PX in Gelsenkirchen but as you can see I was behind the times. Then in '88 we moved back to Trenton, Ontario, a small city and not even that without the Air Force Base, not isolated, but on the fringes, but I got a tape of Killers by Iron Maiden at the duty free shop at Pearson International and the Metal Race began. Shortly thereafter once we were moved into our new house and had, for the first time in 4 years, American and Canadian Television! Thank the gods! So then one day after like, the first day of school, I found a new channel called MuchMusic, and at 4pm that sacred day there was a show called The Pepsi Power Hour! An entire HOUR of Metal and Rock Videos! YES!!! And during the Intro... there was this blasting, chugging, EVIL RIFF, da da dun da, if you know it you know it. It was Reanimation by Sacrifice, it took me a week or so to discover who it was and get a copy of Forward To Termination and IT BLEW MY FUCKING MIND! I was 14 years old then and have been a Sacrifice fan every day of my life since then! Volume 6 is KILLER! And I'll finally get to see them Live for the first time in May at the Rickshaw in Vancouver. Yay! Canadian Thrash has been REANIMATEDDD!"

- Aaron T. Mitton

"Interviewed Rob thru the mail like '87, '88, sent my questions out and got some pretty good insights into the band Forward to Termination-era. Was for a little zine from Norway called Merciless Thrash, still have a copy. Those were the days" - Kevin Templeton



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"I looked up to Rob and Joe big time, being a young guitar player growing up in Scarborough. I met Scott's brother on my first day of highschool, and it was like "No way! Your Scott's little brother!?! Let's party, dude!" Haha. I've always been proud to be from Scarborough, because Sacrifice was! My homeboys!!!"

I still look up to those guys." - **Derek Rockall**



"These guys were not only Toronto's thrash band, they were Canada's thrash band, and personally, as a Scarborough kid trying to make extreme metal in the same scene, these were our vanguards into the abyss. Also, Joe Rico was the first person to show me the Em pentatonic and E Aeolian patterns. They were the cream of the scene, and the new album, 40 years later is a vicious assassin in its own right."

- **Sean T. Blackwood**



"My first exposure was seeing their demo, The Exorcism, on the counter by the cash register at the Record Peddler in Toronto. My friends and I were instant fans, and despite living far from the city we came to see Sacrifice live as often as we could. Through the years there have been some amazing ones, opening for Slayer at the Concert Hall, the "Reunion" show in '06, most recent for me was making the trek to Vancouver in 2022. Always incredible live. Love you guys." - **Mark Robinson**



"Sacrifice continue their longstanding love affair with playing pure aggressive thrash metal. Volume Six is a raucous affair and man does it remain on point." - **Kenneth Gallant**



"Why SACRIFICE matters in general. Well not only are they part of Canada's Big 4 of Thrash which consists of, if I'm not mistaken, Annihilator, Razor, Exciter & Sacrifice. But the Canadian Thrash scene is much bigger than those bands, you got Aggression, Anvil, Sword, Slaughter (no longer active), just to name a few. Along my journey in learning about the Canadian Thrash Metal scene that I unfortunately had to learn through the internet in the early 2010s, All Canadian Metal for me sounds similar to American Thrash, other countries thrash bands but with maple syrup drizzled over it. What do I mean by that, not only is it heavy but add harmonies, melodies of a melancholy nature which adds an emotional attribute that is sonically tasty while at the same still sounding heavy as fu%\$k. Sacrifice has this as does Annihilator. The first time I heard "Soldiers of Misfortune" I couldn't stop listening to it for weeks. I said this is like Slayer's - "Seasons in the Abyss" done the Canadian way. What can I say, Canadian Thrash bands just started to get their dues in the last 10-15 years with the free exposure of the internet cuz unfortunately corporate mainstream "anything" for a very long time pushes what their overlords tell them to. Big fan from Montreal." - **Dan E. Szecsi**



Forty years on, Sacrifice has consistently been about quality over quantity. The group embraced the newest extreme sounds when first emerging in the early 80s and quickly found their voice. Since then, they've constantly refined that focal point, keeping it exciting for both themselves and fans alike without ever losing their edge.

As a Canadian who grew up with their demos and early albums, "Reanimation" will always ring strong in my personal sentiments, but nowadays I find myself playing albums and songs less reminiscent of youth and more reflecting the men they are today. Their sound, their voice, their approach, their choices.

Sacrifice are a pillar of Canadian thrash, admired globally, adored domestically — they've proven themselves an inspiration still relevant in today's global metal underground. May their future burn bright.

- **Jason Flower, Supreme Echo.**



up there after work with my friend Eric and trying to find this skatepark in the dark with no idea where we were going. The bill was Death Sentence, Dayglo Abortions and Sacrifice (they were all signed to Fringe Product at that time). We missed Death Sentence due to



how late we arrived. We could hear the Dayglo's playing as we walked up to the building, but then noticed that Sacrifice bassist, Scott Watts was standing outside having a smoke so we went and chatted with him instead (as Victorians, we had seen the Dayglo's plenty of times already). When Sacrifice finally took the stage they played an absolutely killer set that was mostly material from the first two albums, but I am pretty sure they played one or two numbers that would appear on the next album, "Soldiers of Misfortune"...a trip that was well worth the drive home at two in the morning in what I recall being really shitty weather. It wouldn't be until May 2022 that the opportunity would present itself to see them live again. The pandemic had managed to cancel the festival that was to happen not once, but two years in a row before restrictions made it possible to happen. Obviously the question at hand was, could Sacrifice still deliver the goods all these years later? The reunion album, "The Ones I Condemn" had proven that they were still able to write thrash metal of a very high caliber, but sometimes live is another story. Thankfully there was no need for concern and the Sacrifice of today is every bit as potent as they ever were. I have to say that I am pretty excited to hear the new album that is due out in Canada on Cursed Blessings very soon and even more excited at the prospect of seeing them in Vancouver again this May along with grind legends, Repulsion.

- **Jamie Fulton**

When discussing the best thrash metal bands from the Great White North, Sacrifice almost certainly is in the conversation and is generally on people's short list when compiling who they think would be in the Big Four for Canada (ala Metallica/Slayer/Anthrax/Megadeth in the US). Who would have guessed that 40 years after their Exorcism demo was released, they would not only be creating some of their best work, but would still be the original four members from back in the day as well. I have to admit that my memory is not what it was and I can't honestly recall whether I heard the demo first through trading circles, or if it was the debut album, "Torment in Fire" that made the initial impact for me. What I can recall is that we brought that album into Lyle's Place when it was first released as we used to order imports from Record Peddler weekly. Unpacking the shipment and seeing the cover artwork for the first time, I could already tell I was in for a wild ride before even hearing it. 1986 was a time where thrash was quickly evolving and everything was getting faster and more intense...Sacrifice were world class and every bit as intense as anything else that was out there. The follow up album, "Forward to Termination" would maintain the aggression, but also show some maturity in the song writing as well. It wasn't until the late 80's (1989?) that the band would make its way to Vancouver Island on tour and for whatever reason the booking skipped Victoria and was up in Nanaimo at a skatepark that had been putting on shows. I still remember racing

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FISHBONE

Interview with founding member Chris Dowd
by Ira Hunter and Kevin Close

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Chris Dowd: I'm Chris Dowd. I play keyboards and trombone. I also sing and write in Fishbone.

AU: Is it true that in the early days of the band, like 20 plus people would hang out at your mom's house and jam?

CD: This is how it kind of started. It was during junior high school we all met in the valley. Angelo was out there already. We all went to school out there. We came from South Central Los Angeles. A lot of us middle income sort of families or below that. I had grown up in a household with my uncle Alex who was a Vietnam vet. He pretty much taught me everything I knew about music. He passed along some of that love of music onto myself to Angelo our lead singer and Kendall Jones the other original founding member. He also taught me how to play piano. If I had to say what was like my musical superpower, it would be my ear. Later on I would develop my ability to sing harmonies with people just sort of driving around between our first shows with Angelo singing Bad Brains songs and harmonizing to them.

AU: I noticed at the recent show in Victoria, when you took the mic and were the frontman they were more straight ahead punk songs.

CD: If I had to say what my influence would have been, there's definitely a lot of California punk bands. With Bad Brains it was kind of when I first started discovering that kind of music and they looked like me. I'm not just some lone black kid, listening to Devo by myself. That's really sort of how Kendall and myself kind of struck up this idea of starting the band. He had purchased Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo! I had purchased the first B-52's record and I was like, "I'll swap you my B-52's record for your Devo record." That was the beginning of a 40 something year friendship. When we first started playing the band was initially called Megatron. Clearly we were big fans of Transformers at the time and we kept getting booked with metal bands. We got booked with this band Stryper, the Christian metal band, and we were like, "Why are we always playing with these really weird early glam bands?" and Brian O'Neal, the singer for The BusBoys was like, "It's the name. You sound like a metal band." There was show called Good Times that had a wino character named Fishbone. Brian was like, "That's what you should call the band." So at the next rehearsal we were no longer Megatron.

AU: What's it like working with so many different creative personalities?

CD: When you are young it is great because you are forming your foundational blocks of who you are. But as you become more adept on your instrument it starts to devolve into little power struggles and bullshit like that.

AU: Is that why you took a hiatus from the band?

CD: Yeah, that was definitely why I took a 20 year hiatus.

AU: What were your thoughts on the documentary Everyday Sunshine: The Story of Fishbone?

CD: A lot of times in life we look at things as very black and white. It's good or it's bad. Kind of like this country politically right now. But if you ignore the things that uplift something or you delve into the more problematic parts for dramatic effect, you forget the parts about what we did, what we influenced and what we started. When we first started playing in Los Angeles

there were only two mod/ska-influenced bands. There was literally us and The Untouchables. That was four years before No Doubt, or any of

these other bands. I'm not saying that we were it's pioneers. Ska is a musical style that comes out of Jamaica from the 60s that we sort of adapted and everybody sort of bastardized and did their own version of and that's a beautiful thing. But

I'm just saying, as far as at the time we were kind of it on the West Coast. Most people were listening to Mötley Crüe. Being a kid and having bottles and shit thrown from passing cars because I dressed different I can just assure you that there weren't very many of us out there. My point being that they sort of miss this whole thing that we did artistically and stylistically and there was nothing like it before.

AU: The documentary definitely played up a lot about Kendall Jones joining that religious cult.

CD: He didn't join a cult. That's not what happened.

That was something that at the time, we didn't really understand what was going on with him emotionally to sort of categorize that. A lot of people don't want to talk about mental health. I would say in the last 10 years, people really started drilling down on it and calling things what they are. He had a nervous breakdown.

AU: I see that you got back together with him and did a project?

CD: We've been working on a project, The Dowd Jones. We have a lot of material.

AU: How has Fishbone evolved over the years?

CD: It's a six member band. We've gone through a lot of personnel changes. I feel like we've evolved into something that is more equivalent to the Jazz Messengers or Parliament-Funkadelic. We're now in a different sort of place because it's just myself and Angelo. Kendall was around a lot of the recording for this record because we did the record in Oakland at Hyde Street.

AU: This is a new Fishbone album, correct?

CD: Yeah, it's called Stockholm Syndrome.

AU: Any new songs you're really excited about?

CD: Angelo has this song that he wrote called *Sucker by Sabotage* that I think is really incredible and another song he wrote called *Gelato the Clown*, which is really great. His songs, I would say are sort of coming from a more personal, emotional place with certain social overtones to it. Whereas the stuff I wrote about is very political. I'm sort of sitting around watching this country devolve into fascism. I wrote *Racist Piece of Shit*.

AU: What was the reaction to that song?

CD: A lot of people feel like it's their anthem. My family hates it because they worry about how retaliatory people are in this country and I name check a few people like Kid Rock.

AU: You are just coming off this Red Hot Holiday tour, how did it go?

CD: As far as creatively, I think it's a great sounding band. Presently we're a group of creative people that actually respect each other and listen to each other and that was not happening for a very long time. But now a certain level of anxiety and insecurity has sort of vanished and has been replaced with hope and possibility. That's all I've ever wanted from music.

AU: What did Jeff Buckley mean to you and your career?

CD: I met Jeff in 1989 over the summer. He was a huge Fishbone fan, and then he became like a brother to me. At a time when I was first starting to have doubts about being in Fishbone, he was one of the people that championed me to stay in it and try to make something good out of it. He was just a great friend and a beautiful human. A one of a kind person that I miss every day.

AU: What movies have you been involved with?

CD: We scored a film, Tapeheads, with Tim Robbins and John Cusack. It's about the music industry. We scored it and we're in a scene where

we're playing in a bar in Hollywood and we are posing as a black country band. We were also in I'm Gonna Git You Sucka when Antonio Fargas is coming down the stairs and we are like his background band. That was really cool because we got to record with Curtis Mayfield. It was right around the time that we had done Truth and Soul and we did an arrangement of *Freddie's Dead*. Because we grew up with that Super Fly film.

AU: You have to delve back into history to figure out the roots of things.

CD: I think one of our greatest influences and I think it becomes super obvious when you hear something that I wrote like, Everyday Sunshine, is Sly and the Family Stone. They were one of the first bands that had black members and white members. I think that's one of the things that sort of led us to our love for like The Specials and Madness. Having gone to school in the valley with these sort of interracial experiences you start to realize that because culturally such a significance has been paying attention to people's skin color. But in some people, it started a conversation. When you start to have conversations and you realize you're not really that different from those people. It's just these other things that we use as human beings to divide ourselves. People are divided by ignorance and intolerance. But when we start to realize how alike we are then all those sorts of things seem trivial,

AU: What are your career highlight to date?

CD: I'm still creating and writing. When you asked me what do I think the great songs are on the new record? I wrote this song called *Livin' in the Upside Down* that sort of speaks to where we are as a society right now. But I wrote it from the perspective of an alien that's been living amongst human beings for decades and sort of charting our de-evolution as a society. I think it is one of



the greatest songs I ever wrote and I think when you hear it, you'll be like, Damn that is a dope ass song! This record is a good representation of the bands influence, what influenced us and where we are in the "modern zeitgeist" as it were.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

CD: Come see us on the Warped Tour this summer. We've got some shows in Europe. Everybody just come out and see the band. It is really in a beautiful place right now.

AU: Final words of wisdom for Canadian fans.

CD: Don't allow your country to turn into what's happening in America.

AU: I look forward to hearing the new album and hopefully we'll see you at the Warped Tour if it comes to Canada.

CD: I know we've got some shows coming up there. Oh, I would say since you brought up Jeff Buckley, that one of the last things that Jeff played on was a record that I did when I left Fishbone called the Seedy Arkhestra. I just did a small vinyl run of that record on Escape Hatch Records. It has not just Jeff Buckley but there are a lot of really talented people on that record and you should check it out.

fishbone.net

escapehatchrecords.com

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Alien Weaponry

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

AU: Who are we talking to?

Lewis de Jong: I'm Lewis. I'm the guitarist and singer of Alien Weaponry.

Henry de Jong: I'm Henry. I'm Lewis' brother—older, if that matters, and I'm the drummer, and I do some backup vocals here and there.

Tūranga Morgan-Edmonds: I'm Tū, I'm the bass player, and also do backup vocals.

AU: How's the tour been so far? What's it like sharing a stage with Kerry King?

Lewis: It's been really good actually, considering we've got less crew than we usually have. We're super lucky that all the guys in both other bands, crew included,

have been super helpful. Everything's been running super smooth, and we've been getting sound checks every day.

Henry: Yeah, that's the best you can ask for, as a band on the road, getting a sound check.

Tū: That's as the first opener as well. He's such a professional— he's obviously been doing it for longer than we've even been alive. I think a big reason why we get a sound check every day is because his machine is so well-oiled. The crew just know him inside and out. I don't know if other

bands in this position do the same thing, but we sit back and watch and take notes— we did it with Gojira, watching how such a monster of a band actually functions behind the scenes. So watching someone like Kerry, who's such a legend and such an expert at what he does, it's been really educational.

AU: I've seen on Instagram, Tū, that you've been checking out different decolonial stores on your way. Can you tell us more about that?

Tū: Yeah, it's kind of cool. I've never been to Canada with the band before. The band has been in Canada, but before I was a part of it. Obviously Canada and the US have a strong Indigenous population; different cultures and nations, so it's always cool to try and acknowledge and support those businesses/museums/whatever, you know, interacting with that community everywhere I go. So that's been quite cool, particularly in Canada too, because our support there from First Nations has been really strong, which has been awesome to see.

AU: My first introduction to Alien Weaponry was through Tū's instagram, and his posts about Māori culture, which is interwoven with your music; you often sing in the Māori language and tell traditional and current stories of Aotearoa (AKA New Zealand). What does it mean to you to combine metal and Māori culture as Alien Weaponry?

Henry: When we started using Māori in our music, it was almost second nature for Lewis and I. We grew up speaking Māori, going to Māori school, otherwise known as kura kaupapa, so we grew up in that environment, and were brought up in that way. Obviously, Tūranga was brought up in quite a similar way, speaking Māori at home and being exposed to Māori culture. It's something that I think is absolutely intrinsic for us, I can't imagine not doing that. That's a huge part of who we are as a band; it is who we are as a band. We are a Māori band.

AU: Lewis and Henry were just kids when they started Alien Weaponry in 2010 (8 and 10 years old respectively). What inspired you to create a metal band at that age?

Henry: Our father.

Lewis: He exposed us to all sorts of music; anything from Pink Floyd, to classical music, to Bob Marley, to Rage Against The Machine, to Metallica. I feel like metal is a really good way to release the most stripped back, raw version of your emotions— there's no sugar-coating shit in



metal; you can be as ruthless as you'd like.

AU: Did you always know that you wanted to incorporate your culture into your music?

Lewis: When we were 8 and 10, we were just like "Let's make a band." That's basically how it started. We started entering a competition called Smokefreerockquest. It's like a small band competition. The first year we entered it, we didn't get that far, and then after six years of entering it, we actually won that competition. In that sixth year, we entered Smoke Free Pacifica Beats, which is a sister competition, and we were inspired by

some of our mates in another band, called Strangely Arousing. They entered a song called "Kupenga", and some of those boys used to play in a metal band, and they sparked the idea in our head, like, 'What if they wrote that song but it was their old metal band that wrote it.' At first we didn't know how people were going to react to it because it was kind of unheard of. You know, Māori and metal were very—

Henry: Well, it's typically Reggae, R&B, maybe a bit of rap, that was Māori music at the time. So, it was definitely a bit out-of-left-field for most people, and we had no idea how people would react or whether they would even like it.

Lewis: I think that the craziest thing was, it was all like the oldies that were in seats and, fuckin'—

Henry: People's grannies and grandfathers. I think the other surprising thing for us is the kind of demographic that the music we're doing attracts isn't generally what you'd expect for a metal band. It's super wide; we've had two year-olds at concerts, earmuffs on—

Lewis: Two year-olds and fuckin', 82 year-olds.

AU: I love seeing that. Your new album, *Te Rā* is coming out on March 28th. Your lyrics run the gamut from traditional Māori stories to modern themes such as mental health struggles, social media addiction, and how colonialism continues to this day. What inspired you most?

Tū: Some of it, like "Ponaturi", is just a cool story that I read in a book and was like "That's super





heavy metal." Then you have our first single, "Mau Moko", which is about our traditional markings and the suppression that they have faced over the past couple hundred years of colonialism. The video itself specifically talks about the head trade (toi moko) portion of that history. Then the namesake song, "Tama-Nui-Te-Rā", shortened to "Te Rā" for the album, is one of our very, famous creation stories about how Maui, famous Polynesian demigod, slowed the sun and gave us the days. Then you got ones like "Taniwha" or "Crown", which are our bilingual songs. "Crown" was initially about the incarceration rates, and the imbalance in the justice system, but since then, it's become quite applicable, in a broader sense, about general colonialism and how that affects minorities, in this case, Māori, but it's an applicable song to groups all over the world, which I think is the beauty of these songs. Then "Taniwha" is the same sort of thing; it's like a metaphorical song about karmic consequences.

Lewis: There's couple songs on the album about my own mental struggles and delusions. "Hanging by a Thread" is quite a dark one. I remember playing it to my mom, and she was almost upset, but she liked the song.

Henry: Yeah, she was there going, "Are you okay?"

Lewis: She asks me that all the time, because I present myself quite alright and happy, but then

all that shit I try and get out through my music, but it doesn't always work.

Henry: That's one of the great things when Lewis writes his lyrics— they're always very emotional and very spoken directly from the heart. Lewis has always been quite connected with his emotions in that way, and it translates to fans as well.

AU: The cadence of the lyrics in "Te Kore" sounds like haka. Was that intentional?

Tū: Lots of people are familiar with haka as a form of Māori performance, but we have a lot of other different traditional Māori performances and ways of song. "Te Kore" is about the Māori creation [story] of our universe. It's not really a full song, it's an outro to the album. What I wanted to do was to transition through the stages of creation by transitioning through traditional Māori music into modern music. It starts off with what is called a Mōteatea, that's the very first chanting, monotonous type of vocals. Then there's the haka section, and then it kind of starts to progress into... like half-singing, half like the beginning. Then it's got a much more traditional heavy metal big chorus. Thematically speaking, that song was not only going through the stages of our creation, but the stages of our music evolving throughout time as well.

AU: That's a clever parallel, I like that.

Henry: Yeah, Tū is clever like that. We actually have done a Mōteatea as well on the previous album, which was "ihenga", so it's probably something we're going to continue to do

into future albums as well, because it is something that we found works quite well. It's got this kind of droney, slightly sinister feel to it.

Lewis: It's very pre-colonial, like a lot of Waiata I feel is based on western scales.

Henry: It gives much more Māori feeling to it. With Indigenous music, a lot of people find that it uses these strange scales or strange cadences, and that works really well with metal.

Tū: There's a big difference between singing metal in Māori and then singing Māori with metal in the background. So that's the difference with "Te Kore"; it's not just a normal metal song sung in a different language.

AU: I've read that you incorporate taonga pūoro, or "music treasures" in your music. Can you tell us about these traditional Māori instruments? Did you incorporate any in Te Rā?

Lewis: The big one people know is "Kai Tangata" starts with a pūtātara, which is basically a conch shell that has the tip sliced off and you blow into it like a trumpet. It sounds a bit like a Viking horn, and I suppose it has a similar application in Māori-dom. The other one is kōauau, which is basically just a flute without a reed, and you blow into it at the right angle, and you create a reed beside the instrument. Those are typically made out of either wood, or bone.



signal, because it's very hard to tell where the noise is actually coming from.

Henry: It's a very low, kind of droning noise.

AU: The video for "Mau Moko" is incredibly powerful; about bringing home the remains of your ancestors stolen in the 1800s. Were any of the locations in the video significant?

Lewis: Yeah, that entire music video was shot in Rotorua, and that's where me and Henry's Whānau (family) lineage comes from. There were quite a number of people involved in that shoot that were actually relatives of ours.

Henry: We've actually shot one video down there before, "Kai Tangata". A lot of the people that were in that first video as well were our family. Filming it in Rotorua felt right. It really helped having that connection to where we were filming; it felt like we were doing it justice.

AU: What's next for you guys?

Tū: We have a New Zealand tour. Of course, we're very excited for this album— March 28th. We [also] have a documentary film that is getting a New Zealand release very soon, but we don't know about an international release for that.

AU: Final words of advice?

Lewis: Just go for it. Don't listen to the grumpy old lady who's like, you know, "You're not gonna get anywhere with that."

alienweaponry.com

Band photos by Frances Carter



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BLAST FROM THE PAST

Blast From the Past...

"KISS Cures the Common Cold."

KISS w/ QUEENSRÛCHE

Vancouver Feb 27th, 1985

Pacific Coliseum

A Valentine's Special Edition

By Clark'Super'Mantei

"Hello Past Blasters."

Today's issue is a fun one for me.

As in 1977 I was unable to attend KISS in Calgary and I was about to finally see them live in concert. Let's go back in time to Feb 27th '85. I woke up on show day suffering from a terrible flu and I'm in Victoria needing to catch a ferry to Vancouver. Except I was so sick.

I was helped to the car by my brother and friend Matt so we could go.

While lying dying in the car KISS and Queensrÿche were cranked on the cassette machine. Queensrÿche had their first full length album "The Warning" with the single 'Take Hold of the Flame' and KISS with 'Animalize'. Both released late 1984. Queensrÿche were the talk of the schoolyard and KISS was in peril as they had had 4 lead guitarists changes in just 2 years only. In 1982 original guitarist Ace Frehley left and in was Vinnie Vincent. Vinnie was both in make-up and then the unmasked debut 11th studio LP 'Lick It Up' came in '83. Late '84 came 'Animalize' and fans wondered "Who's Mark St. John?" Well the needle dropped and I turned up the stereo. And "WHOA!"

"I've Had Enough(Into the Fire)" hit me like a heatwave. Next was the new radio smash hit "Heaven's on Fire" and KISS was kicking harder than ever before.

Back at Lambrick Park School the teens knew

Queensrÿche had a 4 song EP of the same name. It was awesome. Now they had a contract and the single 'Take Hold of the Flame' was released to the masses.

They were the new sensation. And KISS seemed to not be if you weren't a fan already. Many weren't. So I took some heat as the teens at my school keep saying "Queensrÿche will blow KISS away."

Show Day: We arrived at the Coliseum and there's not many people as KISS was in lead guitar troubled waters. And no makeup? No Ace and Peter? Jeez. So low attendance.

Matt wore a KISS Animalize flag around himself. So cool. And I was excited to know I'd see Paul Stanley at last.

Wow. My flu kept me drained but my mind glowed. We entered the arena. 20,000 to fill. And only a few thousand showed up. Very small crowd yet there we were. Except when I bought the tour book it wasn't Mark St. John. Was it some new lead player "Bruce Kulick"? Ok. Benefit of the doubt.

Showtime: Queensrÿche... the house lights dim. The fog flows. The green glow as the members put on their guitars. Drummer "Scott Rockenfield" had gold chains instead of cymbal stands. Wow. They sailed into the song

"Nightrider" from the E.P. I was amazed. The set was killer and all 10 tracks were fantastic. I only knew 4. The new LP tracks were really strong. What a way to hear it first and live too! The new LPs title track ended the 10 song set and the leather clad Seattle band with lead singer Geoff Tate took their bow. Wow! Other members on guitar: Michael Wilton and Chris DeGarmo. On bass is Eddie Jackson and on drums Scott Rockenfield. Next up: KISS...

Showtime: KISS. My dream came true.

Flu beware... I am aware I'm about to go into the explosive world of KISS. Houselights get lower and lower. The most empty arena disappeared

was alive(barely) and the hum got really loud. I was stage right and the spaceship style stage of metal turned silver as the massive drum set of the late Eric Carr was just sitting there between the ramps. The massive KISS sign lit up. The crowd was all eyes as we became transfixed. The hum grew with intensity tenfold! I was aware when something behind the stage started to lift and I saw 16 arms held high and the 4 heads of hair appeared. It was Gene Simmons and his bass; some new guy and his guitar; Eric Carr and the ringmaster preacher Paul Stanley with guitar and a smile as he acknowledged us. This was better than my 3-D viewfinder from the 70's. Suddenly Eric Ran down the spaceship's stairs in his cheetah jumpsuit to his drum set. They were gearing up to go with all hands on their instruments.

The humming stopped. Suspended disbelief kicked in as the deafening silence held me tight as night when "You Wanted the Best... You Got the Best ... The Hottest Band in the World...

KISS!!!" sounded out.

When 1976's 'Destroyer' LP opener "Detroit Rock City" hit us loud! KISS ALIVE 2 version too? Whoa... then *KABOOM!* Explosions hit my soul and the magical manic musicians came to life and ran down to the stage. They went berserk and pranced like animals uncaged except for Eric in his caged kit. Then Paul Stanley took to the mic and began to sing "I feel uptight on a Saturday night" and I felt the amazement of my first listen on my Mickey Mouse turntable. KISS exploded like a 'Jack in the box' into a surreal show. "GET UP Everybody's gonna move their feet. GET DOWN Everybody's gonna leave their seat"

Next was "DEUCE", the first song Gene ever wrote in 1973 and the '75 'KISS ALIVE' opener was unleashed. The infamous scream came at the end and I was holding on for life as the crowd roared!

Then the title track of the last masked LP "Creatures of the Night" was next. Gene took to his hockey goalie stance (his costumed legs looked that way to me). "Fits Like A Glove" with Paul's incredible riff hits us all as Gene was screaming like a hot knife thru butter! (Kiss fans know) My adrenal glands danced to MTV's hit video and radio hit "Heaven's on Fire" as Paul's opening scream hit the sky.

Now standing alone was new recruit Bruce Kulick with a solo to initiate his skills to us all. We all accepted him as a member then and there! "Under The Gun" took hold next. Intense! "War Machine" (co-written by Bryan Adams) hit hard. The hard hitting superstar drummer Eric Carr rolled out a massive kit to the front of the stage in a caged rage of glory. God bless his RnRoll soul.

A bombastic jungle style solo blew us away when he flew up to stand on his kit and wave. Animalized adulation! Sticks held high and a mass of hair with a smile in between.

When Ace Frehley surprised us with his vocal debut on Alive 2 with Shock Me in '77 it was glorious. Now Eric Carr took to the mic with his debut screams on "Young and Wasted"

Now... only GENE remained. The crowd chanted his name with pumping fists. Bass Solo time. The blood drooling demon of the seventies had disappeared as we experienced the eighties version of KISS. Playing "Moby Dick" (a riff from Led Zeppelin), only twice as fast, he flew around like a wingless bat taunting the crowd to roar, and roar we did!

BOOM BOOM CRUSH BOOM BOOM CRUSH came from Eric Carr and "I Love It Loud" rang out as the crowd punched the air along with the song.

"I Still Love You" took hold as blue lights engulfed the stage. Paul Stanley's mellow rock ballad embraced us with the haunting howls of his powerful vocals. He owned it in the 80s. No one could touch him.

Timeline: 1977. As dad and I walked into Mr. Sound in Southcenter Mall in Calgary, we were greeted by a full racked front display of 'LOVE GUN'. The 6th studio LP by the band. I stopped breathing. There were my heroes and I had to wait till Xmas to get it. I would unwrap it and rewrap it over and over until Xmas day.

Timeline: 1985 - Feb 27 - KISS



"ALRIGHT... LOVE GUN!" KABOOM. I was transported back in time. I felt awesome.

The place went dark. The mirror ball spun purple as Paul Stanley was alone to end the show. A tradition in Kisstory as the classic debut LP final track began "Out on the streets for

a living, Picture's only begun... Ooo Ooo Oooo. Gotcha under my thumb...

Tick tick tick. HIT IT! KABOOM!!!

"Black Diamond" exploded into surrealism.

KISS was on fire. I was in heaven as Eric took to the mic singing original Catman Peter Criss' vocals to end the night. He did the prowling howls proud too. Usually the classic track flows into a blues style ending yet this night was different. KISS' frontmen all ran back to the spaceship's top platform and the stage held them high when suddenly it started to light up and slowly landed in front of us.

Whooooo Whooooooo! My fists were pumping.

A theme style groove took them all in one giant groove and lifted them to the top, then they were all gone. The lights went out.

Encore time: The lights went up as KISS reformed. "Lick It Up" took hold. We were bouncing like golf balls. Then Paul told us all that no matter how many fans were here he knew we were the KISS ARMY and he thanked us. Then he pulled out a tiny Michael Jackson doll and his imitation of Michael's comments about KISS took hold. It was hilarious.

"Michael... Why don't you just "Beat It?" and tossed Michael way into the back. Lol. Then Rock and Rolls national anthem "Rock and Roll All Nite" capped the night. We all became KISS, the crowd and the band were one! The night's celebration closed with fireworks and explosives blowing up until... Paul shouted "People, KISS LOVES YOU!"

*KABOOM*KABOOM*KABOOM*KABOOM*

"Thank you Vancouver! Goodnight!!!"

And with one last explosion, KABOOM! They were gone.

Lights up and whoa... time to go.

With that we all left the arena and we met up with "Ron Roxburgh" who published 'Firehouse Magazine' from Surrey B.C. We all drove to his home and entered his amazing KISS dungeon. I was amazed. Was I in KISS heaven?

And lastly, "Hey guys. Guess what?"

"What?" they replied.

"My flu is completely gone."

Who needs chicken soup? Just add KISS and you'll get better instantly"

Back to the schoolyard in Victoria...

I awaited the Queensrÿche comments vs KISS... and no offense to the opener but they all said "KISS BLEW US AWAY CLARK!" The fog had lifted.

THE END.

Lastly, a Valentine's prayer and blessing to my mother and her husband who sadly passed away last November. He spent 38 years making her heart glow and then he had to go...

He was a jazz freak. From 1954 to 1957 he was 19 to 23 years young in the jazz world. At the same time '54-'57 was Elvis Presley who gave birth to RnRoll. Two separate worlds collided side by side.

Ripeace Wilfred.

Lastly, guitar master Mark St. John. Born Feb 7, 1956 had a disease which began as he was in KISS and he sadly had to depart the band.

He passed away April 5, 2007. Ripeace Mark.

As I write this the date is Feb 7th, 2025 which was Mark St. John's birthday. He would have been 69. Happy Birthday, Mark.

In the Animalize tour book, Mark's quote was "KISS is the voice of the people and I'll do my talking with my hands."

I do my writing with mine too.

That brings this issue to a close.

Happy Valentine's folks.

"ROCK OUT AND ROLL ON"

Clark'Super'Mantei



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Liva

Interview by Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what do you do?

Pier Carlo: I am Pier Carlo Liva, the composer, arranger, singer of tenor and death vocals, I play the guitar and all electronics.

Liva's four members are Pier Carlo Liva, Nadine Guertin (soprano), Martin Tremblay (bass guitar) and Claude Lacroix (drums).

We are from Sherbrooke, in the southern part of the Province of Québec, in Canada. Sherbrooke is well-known for many good acts in any style since the mid-twentieth century. In metal, Gorguts was the biggest. However, we've always had a good relation and stayed in contact with the Montréal metal scene.

AU: What can you tell us about your latest album *Ecce mundus*?

PC: I returned to the original sound, or the trademark of the band, which is to sing in Latin. We are also a totally new line-up, Nadine Guertin

on vocals, Martin Tremblay on bass and, at the time of the recording, Claude Lacroix on drums. In 2015, when the former soprano and violist, Catherine Elvira Chartier, left the band to concentrate on her classical career, I tried to work differently up until 2020. I was the only singer, so I worked a lot on the high register of my voice. I also started working more with keyboards in live performances to experiment with orchestrations

in order to replace the soprano melodic lines. The viola lines would also be found in these orchestrations, and we find traces of this work in our latest album. I then wanted to work again with a soprano, because it was a strong part of the band's identity and I already had the Samson & Dalila project in mind. Then we found Nadine Guertin, a great addition to the band! She brings her own colours and ideas.

AU: What influenced you to do an album inspired by ancient Rome and the story of Samson & Dalila?

PC: I'm a composer who takes his time, because old ideas become new ideas. I've always worked with my top ten ideas running around in my head. As an example, for the Samson & Dalila songs, I had the concept around 2008, because I had discovered this text then and because of its length, I thought it could give room to an interesting musical composition. It was simmering in my head all these years and it was only in 2020, when Nadine Guertin joined the band, that I could then gather all the elements to finish the two songs (Samson & Dalila I and II).

Music is inside me. I just have to listen to it.

I think what inspires me most is nature. I grew up and live in the woods. I learned to listen to nature and silence. I feel like an intermediary between nature and music.

I'm always inspired by nature, mystical theme and reflection in poems. I can read a thousand poems before working on songs. And at the end, only ten or twelve poems remain.

For our new album *Ecce mundus*, I focused on my principal musical roots: classical music, opera and electronica. I've tried to push the sound of the band to a next level in relation to what I used to do. In comparison to the other albums, the vocal lines are developed in a longer mode.

AU: With *Ecce mundus*, "Liva returns to Latin texts, here medieval texts on themes from Antiquity and other ones, timeless," what made you decide to do this for the album?

PC: With *Ecce mundus*, extensive sonic explorations elevate the group's characteristic blend of power metal and classical music. Grand and elaborate orchestrations further open up this instrumental universe.

On the lyrical side, I returned to ancient poetry from the Middle Age and to the Latin language. I guess this is what the fans expected of Liva's sound.

I read a thousand poems during last years to find jewels that inspired me. On the sonic side, I recorded and mixed all the band, so I think I became a better sound engineer, all in my home studio.

For this new album, I've pushed all of my limits. I worked a lot to write symphonic orchestrations in a way that would give a rich sound, using good sound libraries. With my nine-string guitar, I pushed the limits of the instrument, meaning

I played in the super low end and the very high end of the instrument. Also, my voice technique has improved a lot, so I went and pushed the same limits with my voice: with deep death vocals and up to the high end of my tenor voice.

AU: There are not many bands like Liva in Canada at the moment, have you found that it restricts you or makes things difficult to line up with certain bands for shows?

PC: As the first Canadian band to mix metal and classical music since 1997, we were alone in this category for a long time. It wasn't until we played with Nightwish in 2003, Therion in 2005 and Leaves' Eyes in 2007 that we felt less alone. A few years later in Quebec, some young people had seen us and decided to start their own metal symphonic opera band, or at least one with a classical singer. Now there are several of us, so it's easier to create shows with a lineup of groups with similarities in sound.

AU: What is next for Liva?

PC: We just released our very first video clip as a band, "Samson & Dalila I," that was an important part of our plans this year. I would like

to make a concert with a full symphonic orchestra, maybe next year, to enjoy all this work on orchestrations with live musicians and instruments. I would like to release *Ecce mundus* in vinyl edition. Of course, we're still playing live.

AU: Any plans for touring?

PC: Our promotional tour started a year ago, but we're still booking shows this year. We are open to all invitations in Canada and elsewhere! But we're also hoping to play in Europe, the USA and South America, because there are so many good

metal crowds over there! We are still looking for an agent and a booking company!

livametalband.bandcamp.com

livaband.com



Nylon 6

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Nylon 6: You are talking to Soma and Moron of Nylon 6. I don't know about infamous, but with respect to the local music scene we have refused to go away for a very long time, haha.

AU: Tell us about Nylon 6. Who's all involved and what's the concept here?

N6: Just us two makes for a comfy duo. There's a chemical industry organization in the US called the CSB that investigates industrial accidents. We stumbled over their post-mortem video documenting this huge industrial accident caused by the build up of "popcorn polymer." The straightest people you have ever seen say the words, "popcorn polymer" and "dead leg" a million times over top of a campy CGI re-enactment—the event was tragic but the video is hilarious. It became an obsession. We'd also been watching a ton of Mutant Transmissions spinning synth punk

and such on Twitch and out of all that, Nylon 6 was born.

AU: How would you describe your sound to someone who hasn't heard you before?

N6: Electropunk! And when we say that, think 1977 punk simplicity applied to monosynth, drum machine, noise synths and vocals. Metal Urbain has had some impact but more so Add N to (X) who is super influential for us, especially the track "FYUZ". Recent influences would be Nomos 751, Das Das (Cosey Mueller too) and maybe Infected.9.

AU: Both of you have created various noise and synth projects over the years. What are some that stand out to you and what sets Nylon 6 apart?

N6: Nylon 6 isn't a noise act, so there's that. We love noise of course,

noise is best! Making a sloppy, sleazy, garage punk mess with Nearly Dead was a blast, especially live. Our minimal synth project Null Command is more cerebral and darker in tone, whereas Nylon 6 is all about keeping it fun and simple. Less gear, more direct.

AU: What are some of your favourite instruments/objects/electronics you've messed around with lately?

N6: Very much enjoy the BeniDub DS 07. It's technically a dub siren, but it goes way beyond that. As a bleep bloop box, it kicks ass.

AU: All of your songs are about various plastics



and industrial processes; do your lyrics have any hidden meanings? I've noticed some innuendo.

N6: Surprise, DNA is a polymer! What's punk without some double entendre?

AU: What's special about the Victoria noise scene?

N6: It's stylistically diverse, welcoming, and supportive. Always space for new noise heads!

AU: Do you have any upcoming shows or tours on the horizon?

N6: We just played a matinee show at the Garry Oak Room, opening for Pet Retina. We'll see what shakes out next.

AU: Any new music or other projects in the works?

N6: We're halfway to having a full slate of new songs to record in the spring. Plenty more polymer to extrude.

AU: Anything else you'd like to mention?

N6: There's been a bunch of local noise releases this last bit, *The Years of Lead* and *Ash* by GRHM, *Keep God Out of California* by Fussing, *Remains* by MOT. Pet Retina just had their release party for *Four Suites for Circuit Bent Toys and Percussion*. And the self-titled by Really Loud Free Jazz has been getting a lot of spins on our portable speaker.

AU: What polymer would you recommend for the masses to consume in excess over the holidays?



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CAVEMAN & THE BANSHEE "BORN TO KILL"

Imagine Nina Hagen and Lemmy backed by Public Enemy's drum machine on a heavy metal-meets-techno acid trip. Nanaimo BC's Caveman & The Banshee (aka longtime Vancouver Island OGs Dave Read and Valentina Cardinalli) have been blowing up stages across Canada since late 2021 with their lethal psychedelic electro punk-meets-performance art live shows. 2nd album 'Born To Kill' out March 2025.

With a 2023 self-titled debut album already under their belts, March 2025 sees the second C+TB album "Born To Kill" released via NoiseAgonyMayhem Records. Co-produced by Rob The Viking (BC hip hop legend/Swollen Members etc) and featuring special guests Lori

Goldston on cello (Nirvana Unplugged) and The Theremin Man aka Stephen Hamm (Slow/Tankhog/Evaporators) on, well, theremin, the new album includes 7 original tracks of riff-heavy Caveman bass lines and wailing Banshee vocals over top of classic drum machine block-rockin' beats alongside a cover version of Iggy Pop's 1980 classic "I'm Bored".

The tracks include themes of lighthearted blood and death, real concern that

robots might do us all in, a personal exploration into the depths of a mental breakdown, vintage Star Trek/rattling the bars of a cage, and how it feels to fit in nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

Caveman & The Banshee have already toured across much of Canada, destroying stages alongside such diverse acts as Pink Mountaintops, Devours, Dead Bob, Forbidden Dimension, Fucked Up, Artificial Dissemination, Iron Tusk, Ora Cogan, Hush Pup, Shirley & The Pyramids, Shearing Pinx, The Band Whose Name Is A Symbol, and Willie Thrasher. They will continue to do so in 2025 and beyond.

Dave Read & Valentina Cardinalli have formerly served with Nanaimo bands Moths & Locusts & Anunnaki, have co-

run Nanaimo's BackyardFest and now-defunct artspace/venue the White Room, as well as continuing their own NoiseAgonyMayhem record store & label, amongst many, many other projects.

Influences include: Suicide, Atari Teenage Riot, Public Enemy, Nina Hagen, Motörhead, Nicki Minaj, Goat, Planet Of The Apes, folk horror, 70s KISS, Plastic Ono Band, Daft Punk, Parliament-

Funkadelic and speed metal.

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GRAVEMASS

True Canadian Black Metal

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you



most infamous for?

In this band you shall refer to me as **Mayan Hate**. As that is my heritage and I am full of hate so.... My Gravemass given name is Mayan Hate. I make riffs.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band and what are you all about?

Everyone in the band has deep roots in the Vancouver Metal scene for decades. This first album came extremely easy and naturally, it literally oozed out in about two- three weeks. When I laid out the riffs for the first 10 tracks which will be the makings of our debut album. There really was only one guy that I felt was the perfect fit for the vocal duties. Lorde Heathen. This dude, in my opinion,

the Kill

Mayan Hate – Guitar = Dialed, Savannah, Just Cause

Murderer of Colonizers – Guitar = Process, Savannah, PunchDrunk

Bowels of Hell – Bass = Subversion, Cocaine Moustache, Gomers

Destroyer of Souls – Drums = Zimmers Hole, Revocation, 3 Inches of Blood

AU: What's the Black Metal music scene in Vancouver, BC like these days?

Vancouver Metal/ Music scene has always been a beacon of Canadian content. These days I see more and more great talent come out of this city. We look to add another chapter of Black Metal with Gravemass.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

For Fans of - Slayer, Venom, Morbid Angel, Watain and Napalm Death.

If you are a fan of the bands above – Gravemass'

ABSOLUTE METAL

goal is to kick you straight in the metal nuts.

AU: Are you releasing an album soon?

The album has been done since mid-December, the drums were crushed in two days. Guitars and bass literally took all of three days. Vocals were nailed and included gang vocals within that week. The whole record performance was just over a week. Mixing and mastering is a process that is wrapping up here quickly.

This Process will be done by March 2025 – The release date is not completely etched in stone but aiming for Spring of 2025 at this point.

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This Process will be done by March 2025 – The release date is not completely etched in stone but aiming for Spring of 2025 at this point.

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

Debut album "Luciferian Reign" is the Black gospel of truth. It is a profound and transformative movement that emerged as a beacon of hope for those trapped in the confines of their earthly existence. At its core, in true Canadian Black Metal fashion. We are the tellers of the truth.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

There is no track on this album that I am not



stocked on. Every track has its own go fuck yourself true hate feel which I fucking dig. Mayan Hate Approved.

AU: Describe the band's live show if possible.

We look to create a mood and feel to this band.

But at the end of the day, the music stands on its own.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

I think that once this album comes out and people hear the content, the music and the vibe of the band. If you are a fan of Black Metal or just Metal in general, of course I am bias but I do believe people are going to relate to the message, head bang to the music and horns will be the result of it all.

AU: Any touring plans?

Western Canada tour in July 2025. As the dates and venues become available, we will share on our socials.

AU: Final words.

Stoked to share with you all our labor of Hate. In true Black Metal fashion, we lift our middle finger to establishments of religious dicks that are the source of so much pain worldwide.

Photo Credit: Derek Carr

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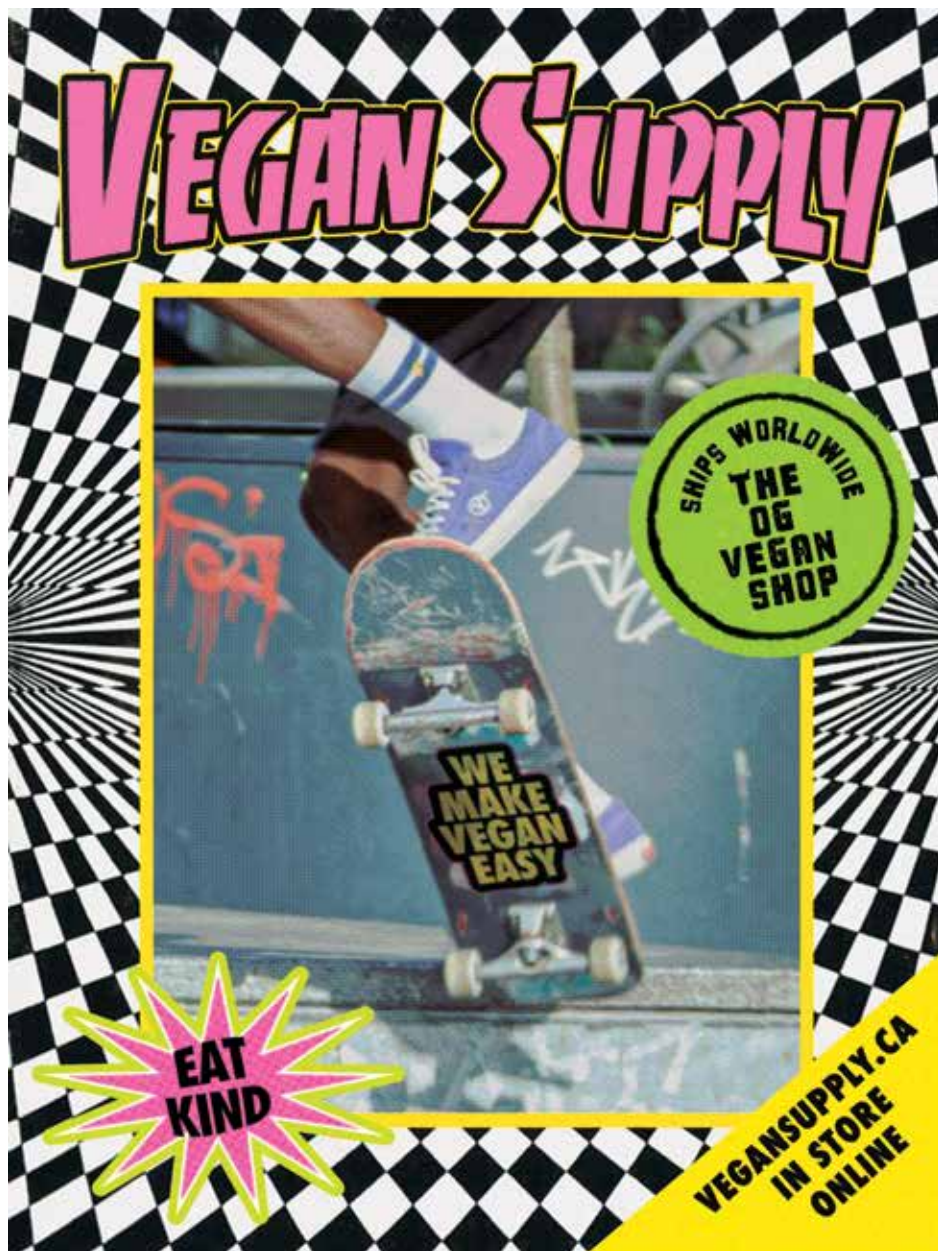
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FROM AP



A PNW Guide to this Winter's Pop Culture Conventions

By Ed Sum

Throughout the Pacific Northwest, the winter convention season for pop culture enthusiasts is shaping up to be huge. The Fan Expo brand is certainly ramping their guest list up this year. Not only are they running two events in this region with a similar round up of guests appearing, but also it seems Creation Con no longer holds the monopoly on certain names! It's about time, as I'm not fond of that organization, since they are a for-profit business. They cater to fans who are willing to spend massive amounts of money for a show dedicated to just one series.

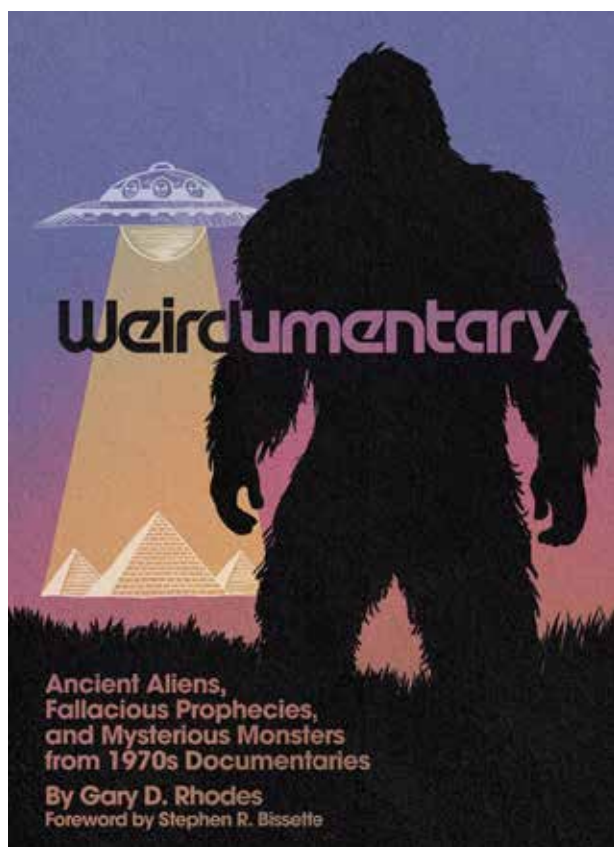
Jared Padalecki will appear at nearly every Fan Expo event being planned this year! In recent years, he's kept busy with the cowboy crime-drama, *Walker*. While that's not in the pop culture mainstream, there'll no doubt be some talk about it when he's up onstage with fellow cast-mates from The CW's *Supernatural*. But the biggest draw may well be with Peter Cullen and Frank Welker, better known for their work as Optimus Prime and Megatron! And while the Arrowverse is no longer on air, the talents from

The Flash are finding the time to appear. For a full list, please check online. What's presented here is a highlight reel.

Comic-wise, Tom Grummett, Casey Parsons and Mike DeCarlo are notable artists to meet. Just who readers love to meet depends on what they enjoy reading. At the Portland show, if I had to pick one name, Stan Berkowitz is tops, since he helped bring *Batman Beyond* (1999) and *Superman: The Animated Series* (1996) to life!

Locally, as most people know, Capital City Comic Con folded, and in what remains are Tsukino Con (Victoria) and Island Fan Con (Langford). They are smaller sized events catering to specific aspects of pop culture. These events have their faithful supporters and I believe both exist to give local fandom a place to have fun at an annual event. As guests are important, sadly the former doesn't have anyone of interest to make me a regular. Island Fan Con's best announced guest so far is Lee Arenberg! Other names like Leanne Lapp and Ashleigh Ball round out the reason I'm making plans.

At the time of writing, Emerald City Comic Con is still announcing guests. The first advertised: Alex Brightman and Brandon Rogers of *Hazbin Hotel* and have been on a great roll since. The main cast of *Starship Troopers* are scheduled to attend, and it's very tempting for me to go. I figured this group wants to experience the late winter weather season after Washington State Summer Con. There's also the crew from *Firefly* (Nathan Fillion, Morena Baccarin, Jewel Staite, and a few more) and *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* (Ethan Peck and Anson Mount)! With Bruce Campbell and Jane Levy together on an *Evil Dead* stage, maybe they have some news to announce. And not to be outshined, John Boyega will be leading the charge in the *Star Wars* front!



and TV series, sold to the unsuspecting public as documentaries, beginning with *Chariots of the Gods* (1970) and ending with *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow* (1981). Leonard Nimoy's *In Search Of* makes an appearance, and so does Orson Wells in his late-career role of sinister yet skeptical narrator. Featuring spurious experts, questionable evidence, and low-budget dramatizations, these pseudo-scientific documentaries examined subjects ranging from the Bermuda Triangle to Bigfoot, from the paranormal to speculative histories.

Weirdumentary is a fun and accessible collection of essays by film scholar Gary D. Rhodes. The foreword is provided by acclaimed comic book artist, writer, and historian Stephen R. Bissette, best known for his groundbreaking work on DC Comics' *Swamp Thing* alongside Alan Moore.

Features hundreds of archival film posters, set photos, and other images in this beautifully designed homage to the high weirdness that shaped a nation

of pop culture mavens. *Weirdumentary* is a must for fans of cinema and pop culture of the 1970s!

Gary D. Rhodes is a renowned film historian and author with a passion for uncovering the forgotten stories of horror cinema. He's a world expert on Bela Lugosi and how Dracula is portrayed in films. When he's not diving into dusty film archives, Gary can be found teaching, lecturing, or working on his next independent film.

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Weirdumentary:

Ancient Aliens, Fallacious Prophecies, and Mysterious Monsters From 1970s Documentaries

Dive into the forgotten world of pseudo-scientific documentaries! Unlock the secrets of the strangest cinematic phenomenon of the 1970s with *Weirdumentary*—the ultimate guide to the bizarre, the unexplained, and the wildly entertaining films and television programs that blurred the line between fact and fantasy.

Weirdumentary examines dozens of movies



The Electric Highway

2025 Lineup Announced

April 4 & 5 - Dickens Pub, Calgary, AB

The Electric Highway Festival is excited to announce the full lineup for the 2025 edition of the Festival being held in Calgary, AB on April 4th and 5th at Dickens (1000 9 Ave SW).

Canadian veteran sludge metal band BISON headlines the whole festival while doom metal band CASTLE headlines Friday night. They will be joined by Southern California band FEVER DOG, and various Western Canadian bands including LA CHINGA, BUFFALO BUD BUSTER, THE GETMINES, 88 MILE TRIP, and more.

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Friday, April 4, 2025

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Blacksmith and Brewer (Vancouver))

CHÜNK (Vancouver)

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The Astral Prophets (Calgary)

BUNS (Calgary)

Doors 5pm - Show 6pm

Saturday, April 5, 2025

Bison (Vancouver)

La Chinga (Vancouver)

Fever Dog (Southern California)

The Getmines (Vancouver)

88 Mile Trip (Vancouver)

Lover (Calgary)

GEOFF (Calgary)

Doors 5pm - Show 6pm

Advance 2-day passes are available for \$75.

Advance single-day tickets are \$40 for

Friday and \$45 for Saturday

The Electric Highway Festival hosts various genres that range from desert rock, stoner metal, doom, sludge, trippy psychedelic, surf rock, acid rock, noise rock, fuzz rock, space rock, blues rock, heavy psych, heavy blues, southern rock, fuzzy punk, sludgy hardcore bands and variations of any of the previously mentioned styles. The festival includes a vendor area with interesting goods for attendees to take home with them.

Previous editions of the festival featured one of the event's past favorites Californian headliners Sasquatch, Juno Award-winning Canadian band ANCIENTS, Vancouver's La Chinga, Space Queen, Dead Quiet, and more, Gnarwhal from Yellowknife, NWT, Calgary's Gone Cosmic, Hombre, Flashback among many more, and a whole host of other great bands.

For festival passes, single-day tickets, and more info check out:

TheElectricHighway.ca

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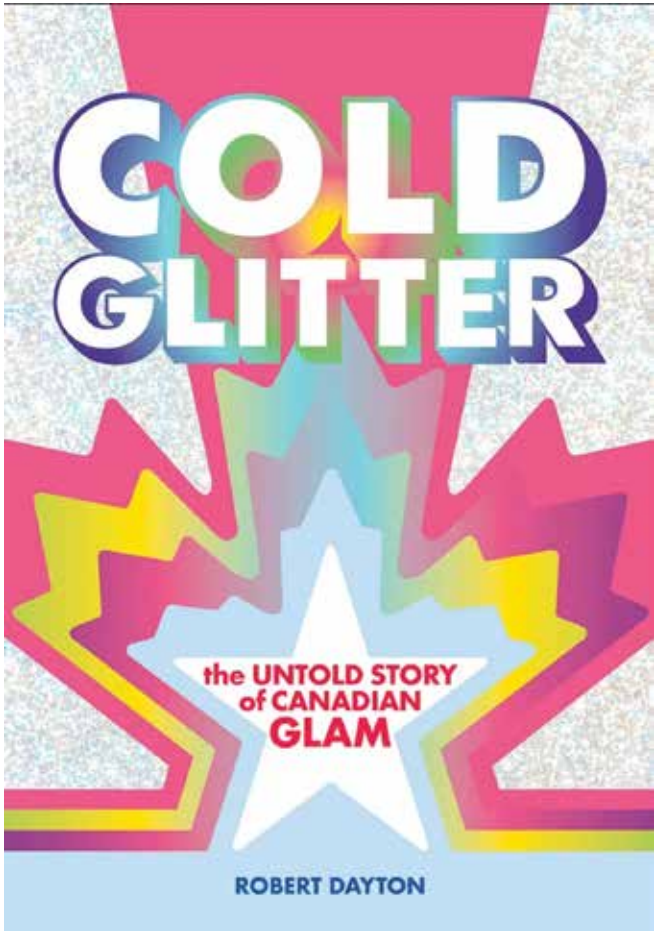
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The Electric Highway 2025 Lineup Spotify Playlist
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Multi-genre artist Robert Dayton taps his Canadian roots to reveal mind-blowing stories of musicians who performed and recorded the glamiest songs full of PIZZAZZAMATAZZ. It's a universal story of artists striving to get their songs heard and maybe get a little famous... Canada famous.

Dayton has spent years researching and interviewing these artists and musicians challenged by geography, colonial mindsets, and being overlooked by the cultural behemoth that is the United States.

The struggle to be fabulous requires makeup, elaborate costumes, and endless miles driving through the frozen tundra. *Cold Glitter* is filled with anecdotes of fun and mayhem as it tells the joyful history of these unlikely stars.

Meet performers you may not realize are Canadian, like magician Doug Henning, Vancouver band Sweeney Todd and their lead singer Nick Gilder, and his replacement, Bryan Adams. Learn about underground heroes like The Dishes, No

Fun, and Thor and the numerous musicians who put away their mascara and left their glamorous wild days behind. Includes hundreds of archival images and rare photos.

Robert Dayton is a multi-disciplinary artist, writer, performer, and comedian who has been in such musical acts as Canned Hamm and July Fourth Toilet. His previous book was *The Empty Bed*.

feralhouse.com

Cold Glitter:

The Untold Story of Canadian Glam

Cold Glitter is a province-by-province walking tour of the soft sequined underbelly I never knew I had, as a so-called Canadian. It is enlightening and hilarious and in the end inspiring. *Cold Glitter* creates a home for the perverse and the ecstatic in a nation vehemently down on both." – Dan Bejar, musician (Destroyer, The New Pornographers).

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The Black Puree

Interview with Director Eric Stroppel
By Sameena Darr

Absolute Underground: I hear you're making a horror film.

Eric Stroppel: It's a short hour film; it's heavily involved with food as a strong element. Food and cooking, passions, drives, hunger that people have and how it motivates them in different ways. We're shooting on 16mm, which isn't super common at the moment for smaller indie projects.

AU: What projects have you been cutting your teeth on in Alberta currently?

ES: I was trying to do a project with CSIF's (Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers) Music Explosion for their Analog Film Festival. You'd pitch an idea for one of three songs they'd give you from a local band. If they selected your idea, they'd give you few roles of 8mm film and essentially you'd go shoot a music video for that song and when the festival was supposed to happen the film would play and

you wouldn't be able to tell who was going to sync up for the first time and band was seeing it for the first time as they were playing it live.

AU: What song did you get?

ES: I got this song called "SLEH VRY" by Locutus, a local two-piece metal band. We managed to get some really cool stuff from that, I was able to use what we had shot to pitch my next project

called *Death Rattle*. We shot that on 35mm and it kind of came together as a dumb joke, like *Death* following people around with a boom mic and recording all the foley from their life. Instead of life flashing before your eyes when you die, you hear more of the sounds of your life playback through your mind. All these little notes of slurping soup or splashing in rain puddles, shit like that.

AU: What is your favourite phase of the filmmaking process?



ES: It's a little bit after you've gotten a few drafts of the script and it's starting to get to the point of, okay, I can start presenting this to people. I find those are the real fun points because you're so narrow in focus you might have a full vision for the project yourself

but when you start to bring people in you get to watch them get excited and present their ideas. You watch the project shift in ways you were never expecting. This is the most nitty gritty I've had to get on details for any project I've ever had. It's immensely mind-blowing when you have

conversations with other people who have far more of an expertise in terms of lighting, food and clothes, special effects and all that.

AU: Where did the horror story start to develop for you?

ES: I start noodling around with a personal interest. *Death Rattle* was really motivated by my interest of wanting to work with analog film purely. For *Black Puree*, the missing ingredient to this is that I started learning how to cook for myself, trying different recipes, going out to different places. Then a couple ideas from film and TV like *Tampopo*, *Raw*, and *Hannibal* all melded into one little dish in my idea.

AU: What culinary practice interests you the most?

ES: Baking. Not necessarily cos' I like eating baking; it's more I like seeing the responses I get out of other people kinda deal. Everybody lights up when they get homemade chocolate chip cookies. I did millionaire shortbread this year during the holidays.

AU: What other culinary films inspire you?

ES: *Tampopo* is the main one. Before I started working on the project, I discovered this cookbook called *Horror Caviar* that A24 put together and it's filled with various film essays and recipes and notes on horror films and all the dishes are inspired by horror film. It's a beautiful book and the dishes all look macabre but



extremely beautiful at the same time. That was a heavy influence on this project.

AU: What director is killing it right now in the horror genre?

ES: Someone to really watch for and is a big influence on this project—it's called *Raw* and the director of that is Julia Ducournau. She followed that up with a really great film called *Titane* which feels horror element-y. It's just weird and bizarre and fucked up. A woman gets pregnant from having sex with a car and a bunch of other wild ass things spiral out of that. Totally worth a watch.

AU: What is the relationship between *The Black Puree* and *Park by Sidewalk Citizen*?

ES: My producer had some good connections with Stefan Gusztak (head chef) and Michal Lavi (owner) at Park. They have been immensely helpful with the project so far. Letting us do

tests within their space and Chef Stefan coming on board as the project's food stylist designing those looks and how we built out those dishes. I highly recommend anybody going to eat there.



Bloodshot Bill

Interview by Peter Illing

Absolute Underground: You’ve been playing and creating music since the ‘90s. Did you ever think “artist and performer” was the professional trajectory you were going to have or were there other career paths you had envisioned for yourself?

Bloodshot Bill: After so many shitty jobs as a teen, I guess I figured I had to give it a shot! I really don’t have many other skills. I guess I can cook, but damn I hated kitchen jobs. Maybe it was the bosses I had, I don’t know. Kinda neat being your own boss though. Sometimes I do wish I had a normal 9-5 but know I’d prob just wanna blow my brains out if I actually did.

AU: What did your parents think about your music when you first started releasing?

BB: My folks were always very supportive of me playing music, always letting my friends come over to jam anytime when I first started in high school. I don’t think the music I play was 100% up their alley, but they would sometimes come to my shows (my mom still does). Of course, early on, my dad gave me the “When are you gonna find a real job” talk though, like any caring parent should!

AU: What has been your favourite show that you have performed and why?

BB: Each show is hopefully special for different reasons. I try to have a good time at each one. It doesn’t matter how big or small it is. Usually, the ones with the most crowd interaction and fun surprises are the best. Too many highlights to name one but even sometimes the lowlights are fun too.

AU: Who have you been listening to recently?

BB: Lately, been listening to lots of old comedy records, ‘80/’90s hip hop, ‘50s RnB, Doechii, and Mary Simich.

AU: You have projects with the members of King Khan and BBQ Show. How did these relationships start, and how do y’all determine you’re ready to record another album. Any plans for future releases with either project?

BB: I’ve known King Khan since high school (we went to different schools but somehow met). Met BBQ (Mark) during the Spaceshits era. We never really planned the recording projects we did together, we’d just happen to be able to hang out for days together each time. Doesn’t happen too often as we all live far from each other, so who knows when/if it will happen again.

AU: At what age did you start making music and what was the catalyst into making it?

BB: I started off playing drums in high school but didn’t start writing my own music until later when I started playing guitar. I started doing that cause I just wanted to make music I liked.

AU: What does your songwriting process look like and where do you find your inspiration?

BB: For songwriting, it’s probably the same as most. I either get an idea for a lyric and start there, or a guitar riff or whatever. I guess I like to grab inspiration from anywhere but the funniest place to get it is from bands I hate!

AU: You are the kind of artist that tours when he wants, releases music when he wants, and embodies a true DIY ethos. You have crazy work-ethic, highly impressive output musically, and I want to know where does it all come from?

BB: I guess it’s two things: One: I get bored easily, so I always want something new going on, whether it’s music, a new shirt design, touring places that interest me, etc. Two: Like most people, I gotta work to survive! So, more travel, more new things to keep me entertained.

AU: I wanted to know is there someone you are wanting to collaborate with?

BB: I’d like to collaborate more with folks I have already worked with in the past. It’s usually only been a few songs on a 7” together so more is definitely welcomed. Of course, I’m always a fan of what they do (and hopefully vice versa).



AU: Do you have a favourite album you’ve made or been on and why?

BB: I think my favourite albums of mine are always my last (or upcoming) album. Probably ‘cause it represents more how I’m feeling at that time.

AU: With the rise of influencers, AI music, and

the ever-changing online landscape for music streaming, do you see the working music class shrinking or is there room to adapt?

BB: I have no clue about that AI! I hear some stuff that sounds cool and I think others shut it down only because they’re informed that it’s AI... If they didn’t know and listened with different ears, they might like some of it. Either way, there will always be live bands and there will always be good ones and bad ones... choose wisely!

AU: You have had major publications write about you, had releases on the legendary Norton Records, and a career that doesn’t seem to be stopping. What is next in the Bloodshot Bill saga? Book, screenplay, producing other bands?

BB: I’ve wanted to write a book for a while now. Some dumb stories of my tour experiences etc. Hopefully working on that soon. Would like to do more film stuff too. Been able to slow down my tour schedule in the past few years and I appreciate that. I’ve been asked by bands to record them but I am not really into doing that at the moment.

AU: Have you been working on any new projects?

BB: I have a new album coming out on Goner Records in the spring, a big euro tour with JD McPherson, an EP

with Gerard from Deja Voodoo, Volume 3 of my Halloween tunes, and probably a few more things!

bloodshotbill.com

Photo by Emilina Filippo



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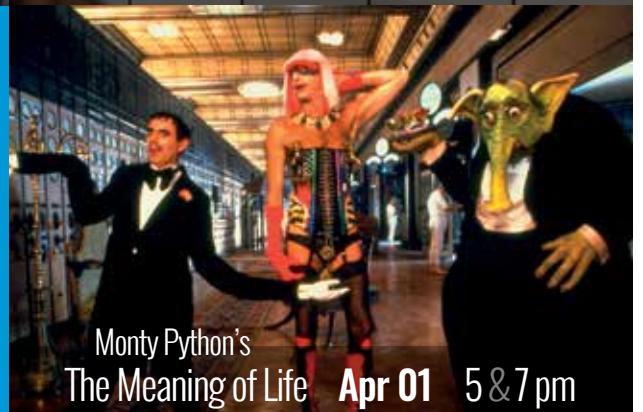


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Ashen Pall

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Jesse: I tend to break out in throat singing in social settings, causing situations to get awkward fast.

AU: What was your first introduction to music you knew your parents didn't want you listening to?

Jesse: My dad sings in a church choir; I'm just expanding the tradition to an evil one, haha.

Alex: My parents were fairly supportive with my dad giving me Metallica's *Black Album* when I was seven. It was only later, when I expanded more into death metal, that my parents did not understand my taste in music so much anymore. The support never stopped, though.

Eric: A childhood friend (Bradley Zorgrager, who has gone on to do some awesome things in the metal community—congrats Brad if you read this!) introduced me to post-hardcore and metalcore in the early 2000s and death metal, etc. wasn't far behind; caught at the Gates on their reunion tour together on a family road trip— if anything, my love for loud music probably comes from my

parents!

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

Jesse: Vancouver BC has taken some hits like everywhere, but we are back on our feet and fighting.

AU: What's the most insane thing you've done?

Ryan: Too many things to pick, so I'll go with the only one I still have photo evidence of. One time years ago, me and a friend got super drunk and decided to break onto a golf course late

at night. I pretended to wash my balls on the ball washer before we got chased by security. Was funny as hell.

Jesse: Shovelled heaps of pigeon shit off a billboard 200 feet in the air.

AU: How did Ashen Pall get started? Who is in the band and what are you all about?

Jesse: Ashen Pall is a recent creation, drawn together by Ryan Fisher crossing over from producing electronic bass music (AltBraKz); he knew he had to join the dark side and make killer metal, orchestrating the drum section, rhythm guitar, and overall structure of the music. Throat singer Jesse Ellytt breeds his emotionally caustic vocals within that structure, following the pain and intricate destruction. His vocals often blend in with the instruments. Alex Schmidt weaves beautiful and wicked leads on top, supported by creative and energetic bassist Eric McGinnis.

AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if possible.

Jesse: Frantic, heavy, and intricate. Hyper then slow; roller coaster situation. Soul-searching dissonance wielded like a knife.

AU: How do you approach writing music?

Jesse: Ryan is a machine, he produces and reproduces fast, we all follow, except Alex has taken the lead in a couple slower songs on the album, and always has wise direction to elevate the work. Eric always surprises us with how well the bass fits.

AU: If you could hire anyone to do your album art, who would you pick?

Alex: Personally, I'd say Mariusz Lewandowski. He was a surrealist painter from Poland who unfortunately passed away in 2022. I love his choice of colour and shape, as well as the exploration of symbolic elements such as death/the reaper itself.

AU: Who is the best skateboarder in the band?

Ryan: Me and Alex would have to fight it out I guess, but I'm still gonna say me, haha.

Alex: Probably Ryan... I've had too many broken bones in recent years.

AU: You released an EP recently. Any stand-out tracks you are extra stoked on?

Jesse: "Eclipse" has great riffs and drone situations

AU: Any plans to release a full album in the near future?

Ryan: Yup! Our first full length album drops March 1st. *The Elegy of Waning Mortality*.

Jesse: One album ready to go and we have new work in progress as well.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

Ryan: We have two shows coming up in March. One is at KW Studios in Vancouver. We are opening for Zack Brannon and Pharm! The other show is the Wacken Battle— we are stoked to be able to take part. Round 2 is on March 22nd at the

Cobalt.

AU: Best advice you ever received?

Ryan: "If you're gonna be dumb, you gotta be tough." I'm not dumb most of the time, but it's good advice.

Alex: "Ideas are worthless. Everyone has ideas." It's about execution, not the idea.

Eric: "Celebrate small wins." It's easy to get discouraged if you only focus on the end goal, not the steps along the way.

AU: Any dating/marriage advice?

Jesse: Take time to listen.

Alex: Don't do it! ...On a more serious note: learn to be in balance with yourself, otherwise you'll never be in balance with someone else.

AU: Any fetishes to share?

Alex: Fetishes: yes. To share: maybe next time?

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

Jesse: Home date.

Alex: What Valentine's Day? We got two kids at home... We're lucky if we are able to watch a movie together once in a while, haha.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Jesse: Believe in yourself, try hard, appreciate your friends and

family.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Jesse: Don't spit in the wind, never eat yellow snow.

AU: Where can we find you online?

Ryan: We are on all social platforms except X. BOO on X. You can also find us at our website ashenpall.com

ashenpall.bandcamp.com



THE FIXATIONS

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Jones and **The Doc** here. Not infamous for much. Unknown for a lot.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

Our homebase is San Antonio, Texas. It's hot, it's rough, and it rocks.

AU: Who else is in the band and what does it say on their Tinder profiles?

OC Flores on drums, **Rusty Nails** on bass, **The Doctor** on lead guitar and backing vocals, and **Jones** on rhythm guitar and lead vocals. No profiles needed. The band spends evenings with **Palmela Handerson**.

AU: Give us a brief history of your band.

Well, we all came up playing in shitty bands. We're still playing in a shitty band, but this one's better.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock 'n' Roll? or all of the above?

We just came off of Dry January, so it's just been

drugs and rock 'n' roll. But we've got high hopes for the rest of the year.

AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if possible.

Just imagine AC/DC played by punk rockers, and then imagine some oozin' aahs mixed in. Something like that.

AU: Have you released an album recently? If so, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

This past September, we released *The Fixations Are Who You Thought They Were*, our second album. See above

response and imagine we said it better.

AU: Does the album explore any particular themes or topics?

Death, life, betrayal, vengeance, death, et al.

AU: Any standout tracks you are stoked on?

Tombstone Rattle, *Strike (While the Iron's Hot)*, *Tonight*, and *Backstabber* are all standout tracks for us. It just feels like we said everything we needed to say in those songs.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

Every day is Valentine's Day for Palmela.

AU: Any fetishes to share?

You ever gave a chick the ol' Arkansas...?

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

We're starting to work our way overseas thanks to our Australian brother, Andy "The Animal" Whyte. He's our Visa: He's everywhere we wanna be.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your mother to know?

What, are you billing by the hour?!?

AU: Anything else to promote?

Austin/San Antonio bands we love: The Babylonz, The Oxys, The Black Birds, Paul Lidel's *Scream Therapy*, Diamond Denim, Jason Kane and The Jive, Eden Burning, Pavel Demon and The Revenant, The Dementers, SPOCK, The Dispicables, Thunderosa, Burnout, Hard Luck Rebels, Death Row Romeos, Bexar County Bastards, and... Christopher-motherfuckin'-Cross!!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Oh, you're still here? Ummmm.... "It's better to shoot for the moon and hit the fence than to shoot for the fence and hit your foot." - Don C.

AU: How do people find you online?

1. Open streaming platform. 2. Type "The Fixations." 3. Go to there.

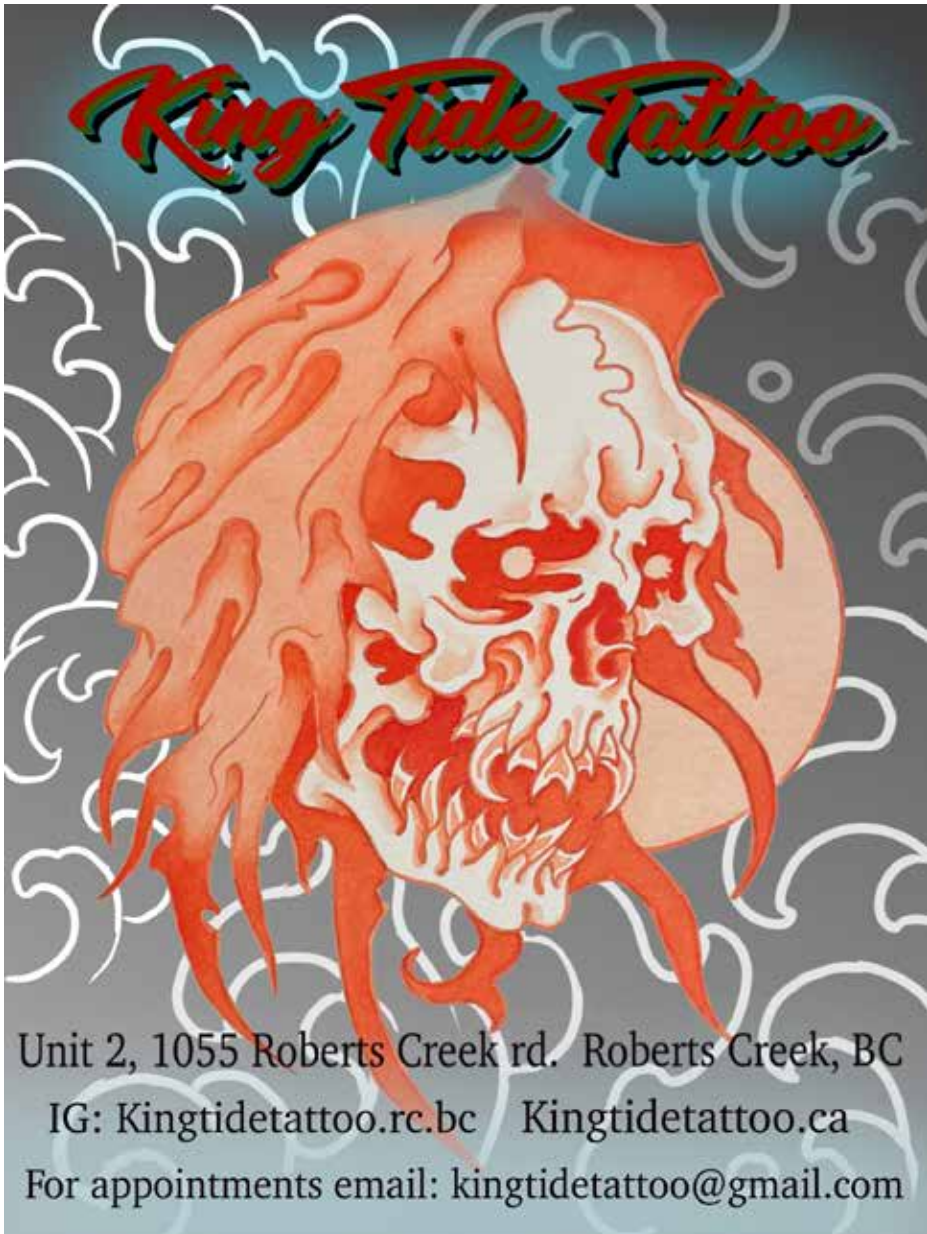
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The Dashboard of a 1970 Chevy Nova

By Jason Salthouse

I remember the sound of shuffling through cassette tapes. Hunting. "It's the white one," now partially yellowed from living on a dashboard, sticky from droplets of coffee mixed with the ashes of a million cigarettes.

The pinky finger made a good tool for tightening up a loose cassette tape. The sound of the magic snapping into place as I waited, anxious. The words

on the old tape were almost faded completely from a decade of being handled poorly with unkempt fingers, tossed around like a rag-doll, and bleached from the sun. It didn't matter. I knew. It was my job to man the stereo. Rewind. Side A. Song 1. The outside world disappeared. Speeding down back country roads, hidden by trees. Winding along, rolling hill after hill after hill. We were just cruisin'.

It was warm. The air smelled like a mix of sunshine, rain, and smoke. Time flew by, and still couldn't pass fast enough. I was learning. Waiting, preparing, practicing my form. As we approached the peak, I settled in. I had my spot. My tiny fingers turned into drumsticks, and the world became a drum. They stab it with their steely knives, but they just can't kill the beast...

I was 5 years old, maybe 6? I can't truly remember, but in that moment I was king. I was learning my own rhythm. The rhythm of everything coming together all at once is what I've been after since. Perfection. Timing. Rewind it back, do it again and again until you don't think, you just do. This was it. I had found my place in all the madness.

In all the turbulence I still remember the soft smile of the man, a shadowy figure at the wheel. A silent nod that I was hitting the mark. It felt like a split second, and it was over. I was furious. Furious to do it again, and again, and again.

Rewind. Side A. Song 1.

An excerpt from *Taken With a Grain of Salt - A Collection of Short Stories*

Art by Sam Berg

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Boundless Joy

Interview by Malcolm Quick

Absolute Underground: Today we are talking with Boundless Joy. Would you mind introducing yourselves?

Ivan: I'm Ivan de Prume, I play drums in the band.

Rob: I'm Rob Keith, I play bass and sing backup vocals.

Sean: Sean McLeod here, I play guitar and sing lead vocals in the band.

AU: Where are you based out of and how

would you describe your music?

Boundless Joy: We are based out of Salem, Oregon. Our music is a mix of everything we love and grew up on. We have influences from classic metal, hard rock, punk and funk. All of our songs are some blend of all those elements.

AU: What's the Oregon music scene like?

BJ: The Oregon scene is thriving with no shortage of local bands. It's a pretty eclectic mix of artists. Portland is currently over-saturated with so many bands that it's been a tough city to break into.

AU: I heard you guys are coming up to Vancouver to play in March at Lana Lou's. Have you played in Canada or Vancouver before and do have any fun memories of your time here?

Sean: We have never played in Canada with Boundless Joy! Looking forward to it.

Rob: I have never been to Canada at all. I'm very excited to dip my toes in the

country.

AU: Do you have a favourite snack to eat on the road?

Rob: Jordan's wife's stuffed dinner rolls. She made cheeseburger and pizza style and they was tasty.

Ivan: I gotta have my pickles, especially with my New York style roast beef gyros!

Sean: Triscuits and hummus. String cheese. Lots of chips.

AU: Do you have any favourite pieces of gear or instruments?

Rob: I've always used MusicMan basses. They're perfectly balanced and play incredibly.

Sean: I'm currently using a custom Bond guitar on the road that I love. My absolute favourite guitar to play is my Gibson SG 61 Reissue. It's been a workhorse.

Ivan: I love my African djembe, my Pearl brass free-floating snare drum, and my Avalon AD 2020 mic pre-amp.

AU: What do you think is the key to writing a good metal or rock song?

Rob: Picking your moments. Most songs don't call for a 3-minute guitar solo or extended jam. It may be metal but at the end of the day it's all about song craft and doing what the songs call for.

Ivan: Playing from your heart and letting go of trying to prove anything.

AU: What kind of music do you like to listen to?

Ivan: I love all kinds of music. It all depends on the mood really. From jazz to hip hop, from classic rock to metal. If it's got a great groove and catchy melody, I'm all about it. Right now, I have been really enjoying Judas Priest's new album *Invincible Shield*.

Rob: I listen to everything. I'm basically a fan of organized noise, but lately I can't get enough Gojira, and King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard. Mars Volta is my all-time favourite group, except maybe Frank Zappa.

Sean: I'm into all kinds of music from rock to jazz. I've always been a big fan of Queens of the Stone Age, Radiohead, Black Sabbath, and David Bowie.

AU: Any artists or albums you think are under appreciated that people should listen to new or old?

Rob: King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard, they don't give a single shit about genre and do everything from progressive thrash metal to EDM but mostly variants of rock, their writing has only gotten better with time.

Ivan: Raquy Danziger. It's Middle Eastern music with Tabla- amazing stuff.

AU: Ivan, you were the original drummer in White Zombie; any chance we will hear a Boundless Joy re-imagining of a White Zombie

song?

Rob: We've thought about it. It's been hard coming up with a track that makes sense for us. Boundless Joy is in no way a copy of White Zombie, especially vocally. We're still down though.

Ivan: Yes. There's definitely a possibility. We're writing new material right now for the next record but since you're asking about that, I think we should consider it.

AU: You also run a recording studio can you tell us a bit about that. Did you guys do all your recording there?

Ivan: Yes. Burningsound Studios. I mainly focus on recording local artists and bands. I also teach drums out of the studio. We recorded and mixed our debut album and a couple of singles there. Jason Carter mixed Bong of Eternal Stench at Wavelength. We are currently scheduling a session to record there too and see how it goes.

AU: Any albums or tours coming up that you guys have been planning?

Rob: We've got some singles we're putting out over this year and working towards a new album. We're also doing a short little stint in March, we got Lana Lou's up there in Vancouver. We're playing Tacoma the night before and Spokane the night after. We're planning on making our way south, hopefully starting late spring. Follow us for details as we have more.

AU: Any additional comments?

BJ: We heard that Vancouver has a sentient pickle that grants wishes. We would like to formally request a meeting.

AU: We will see you March 7th at Lana Lou's!

Ivan: Looking forward to it!

boundlessjoy.bandcamp.com

boundless-joy.com

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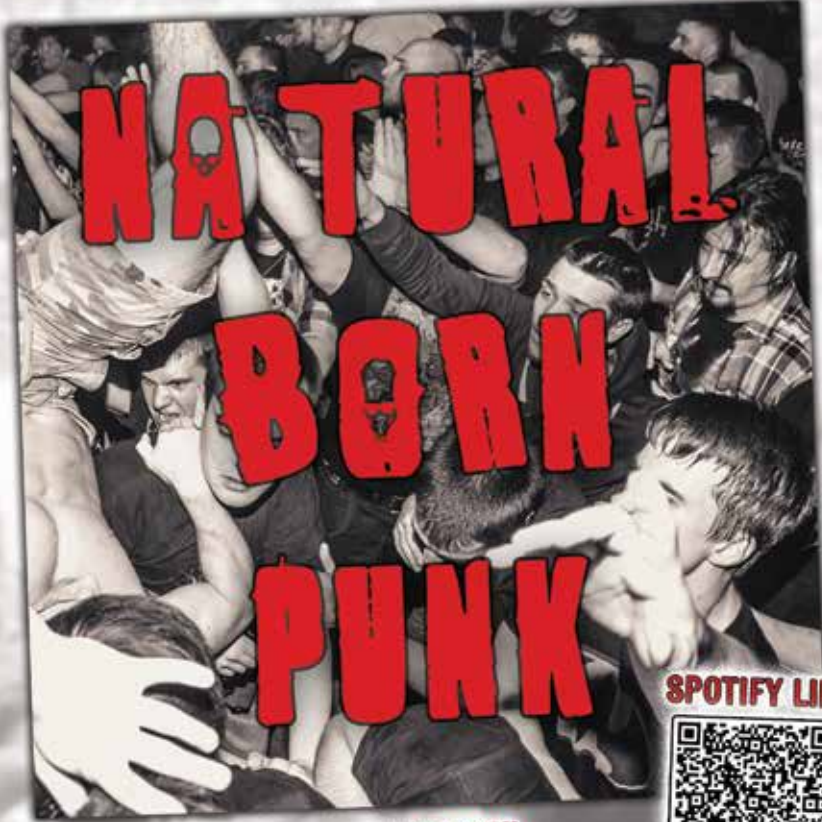
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THANKS TO DENIAN FOR CREATING THE COVER PHOTO.



GOB - Still Hoarking

Interview with Theo Goutzinakis (guitar & vocals) and Steven Fairweather (bassist)

by Ira "Soda" Hunter

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous and or infamous for?

TG: My name is **Theo Goutzinakis**. I play guitar, sing and I can play a kazoo and I'm probably most infamous for plugging up toilets and maybe famous for making faces.

SF: My name is **Steven Fairweather** and I'm known for comic book writing but I'm famous because I'm friends with Theo.

AU: What comic do you write?

SF: Chaaya and the Red Hand.

AU: What first got you into music?

TG: My parents were Greek immigrants, so they like Greek music. But they were kind of westernized because they wanted to fit in. So there was Elvis, Engelbert Humperdinck, Neil Diamond. Which got me into listening to bands like The Police and then from that I branched out to rock bands like Van Halen and the Ramones.

SF: What got me into music was movies and TV. It was like America's Greatest Hero theme song and then Ferris Bueller doing the Beatles in the parade. What I remember the most is when my mom bought me Appetite for Destruction by Guns N' Roses.

AU: Were you guys in any bands before Gob?

TG: I was actually in a band with Tom (Thacker) before Gob it was called Tommy's Biscuit. It was like a grungy punk, alternative rock band. Actually my younger brother sang in that band and I played guitar. As we were playing in that band eventually we wrote a few songs that were Gob songs. They were a lot more punky, like Losing Face and Marlena. The songs were written before and then when that band kind of dissolved, Tom and I were really good friends, we were like "Let's do this thing." We wanted to carry on doing this

kind of punk band thing that we were doing.

AU: Where you trying to be pop punk or skate punk? What was the mission?

TG: It's weird because our first EP was nine songs and came out in '94. But we were working on it a bit in '93. We had a girl bass player and we were looking for a drummer. I remember we went to show at the 86th Street Music Hall. It was Seaweed opening up for Green Day and Bad Religion. I'd heard of Green Day but I wasn't sure, this is before *Dookie*. I was there to see Seaweed and Bad Religion. But then when Green Day took the stage, second band, I was just fucking blown away. Billie Joe had everyone spit in the air and it all landed on him. I don't know maybe that's where the name Gob kind of maybe got Tom thinking. But I know that also Tom was working at A&B Sound, the record store back in the day, I remember him saying to me, "Hey, there's not that many G's for punk bands. What do you think of Gob? I was like, "Perfect."

AU: I'm old friends with Jamie Fawkes, how did he...

TG: ...slither his way into the band? We had a girl bass player in the band and it just didn't work out and we needed a new bass player so we tried him out. It is really weird because it was just for Too Late... No Friends. He played on that album.

AU: I heard he came home halfway through tour on the Greyhound. What happened?

TG: He was on tour with us and then he got a call or a message from his girlfriend that said, "You're cheating on me. All your shit is on the lawn." We were I think in Saskatchewan. We were getting

close to home. We had two or three shows left and he goes, "I have to go home now because all my stuff's thrown out." So he left and then I had to play bass for one show and Tom played bass for one show. We were a three piece essentially for two shows in our history. It was enough to be like he's done. We're going to need someone new.

SF: That started the Spinal Tap effect of bass players.

TG: Steve, you would be the 8th, right?

AU: How did you slither your way in there?

SF: There's a band called By A Thread that Gabe (Mantle) plays in now. We were doing shows and putting a record together. Me and Theo were becoming good buddies and him and Tom came on board to produce and record the album. Then when Craig (Wood) left the band, They were looking for a new guy and put out their feelers.

TG: Craig joined Avril Lavigne's band because she asked him to when we went on tour with her back in the day. It was an opportunity for him.

SF: So I joined up and it's been 16 years now.

AU: Let's talk about this tour. This is Sum 41's final tour but it's not Gob's final tour and Tom is pulling double duty playing in both bands?

TG: Yeah, it's the farewell tour. Deryck (Whibley) wants to go out on a high note. We played a show with them in 2022 in Toronto. But there was

always talk of having us do more touring with them. Since 2006 Tom has been playing with them. What I have heard is that Deryck has other endeavours that he wants to pursue and try out.

AU: This is the final North American tour? Are you still going to Europe with this?

TG: For Sum 41 the last two shows in Toronto that is the end. Then I think they play the Juno awards.

SF: But Gob's hitting Europe in the summertime.

TG: We are doing Punk Rock Holiday in Slovenia. Tells Bells in Germany. BrakRock in Belgium. Tom's been to Europe several times with Sum 41, Gob itself has not been to Europe ever. We've always had fans requesting for us to come from back in the day. It's weird that we never did.

AU: You mentioned the Junos, you guys were nominated for best new band in 2000?

TG: We were nominated twice. One for, I Hear You Calling, for best video, which, I mean, should have won. Also in 2000 or 2001 we were named best new band or best new group. But we already had been a band from 1994. It's kind of funny. It's like we weren't really that new, right? One kind of hilarious thing on MuchMusic live. We happened to be there and they said "Oh, you guys are nominated for a Juno. That must be exciting. What's your nomination for?" Then the mic came to me I'm looking at the camera and it's live TV, and I said "Best performance of cunnilingus on a woman." then they quickly went to commercial. Then when we were at the gala dinner and it was all the higher-ups in the network and our table. This lady comes over and they're like, "Oh there is Denise Donlon," who was one of the main executives. She came over to the table and she said "Which one of you, you know what you said on TV, which one of you did it?" I was pointing at Terry McBride the manager of like all the bands. Meanwhile, all the other 10 people at the table are all pointing at me. I'm like, Thanks guys. I'll remember this. I was like, Oh my god, I literally put my foot in my mouth and fucked this up for the band. Then she goes, "Good. Because I wanted to know who I was taking home tonight." I was like, we are going gold! That really happened.

AU: Was the video for the song Soda the first one you made?

TG: It's funny because we were on Mint Records. We did *Too Late... No Friends*. They gave us like \$1,200 to make an album. Then they picked *You're Too Cool* for the first video single. We had never done a video at this point. I remember Tom and I were talking and Tom was like "Don't you think we should be doing *Soda*?" Because it was kind of upbeat and more what we wanted to do. But also the main reason was because the song was about BMX jumping. We wanted to make a ramp as an excuse and just go lake jumping.



AU: Are you working on a new album?

TG: Tom's written a bunch of songs. I have some songs. But Tom's been so busy with Sum 41 it's been hard to record. But after this we'll have Tom back full time. So yes, we do have new music.

AU: What record label are you currently on?

TG: Well, Dine Alone Records just put out all those vinyls of ours and they asked us if we had any new music, so sounds like they're interested.

AU: Any career highlights to date?

SF: I would say the highlight might be growing up in BC and being able to play Rogers Arena. We know we're like a punk rock band and we play these punk rock dive shows but to get the opportunity to play a venue that me and Theo grew up going to see hockey games at and big ass fucking bands playing that venue. To play there and have some family and friends come out and see us play. It's kind of like playing our Madison Square Garden. So the fact that we're doing that might be one of the big highlights.

AU: Take us through Gob's the discography?

TG: There is the self titled EP that came out in '94. In 1995 was the full length album *Too Late... No Friends*. Then there was *Ass Seen on TV* which was an EP we did in '97. Then 1998 *How Far Shallow Takes You*. In 2000 *The World According to Gob*, 2002 *F.U. EP*. *Foot and Mouth Disease* was in 2003. Then a big break until 2007's *Muertos Vivos* and then 2014 *Apt. 13*. And now you can get all of those on vinyl, the whole bundle from Dine Alone.

AU: What music video had all the zombies in it?

TG: *I Hear You Calling* in 2000. The director had a whole team to do the special effects. The girls were Toronto Argonaut cheerleaders but they were all in full makeup when we first saw them. So they look like hideous zombie girls in their little cheerleader outfits. I remember at the after-party, it was like, Who are all these girls? Oh those are the zombie girls, we didn't recognize them.

AU: Final words?

SF: Your magazine looks dope.

TG: Thank you for having us.

gobband.com
dinealonerecords.com





Drumsticks of Doom Part-Time Comix

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are your skillz to pay the billz?

Jon Westhoff: Hey this is Jon Westhoff, writer, letterer, publisher at Part-Time Comix. Although, it doesn't pay any billz, it adds to them.

AU: What started you on your path to becoming a comic book writer/publisher?

JW: I was just looking for something to help me stay creative as my drum-playing days were winding down. Found some awesome people to work with on a podcast message board back in 2009 and have been making funny books ever since.

AU: What's the name of your publishing company and what are some of the projects you have created?

JW: Part-Time Comix! We have published 17 books since 2020, including *Drumsticks of Doom*, *LCS*, and *Depowered*.

AU: Did you become a comic book letterer by necessity when working on your own projects?

JW: I did, but I continue to do it because now it's part of how I create. I change a lot of dialogue after the art is done.

AU: Who or what are some of your inspirations?

JW: I get a ton of inspiration from music, like Alex Cameron and Father John Misty. As far as comics, I am heavily influenced by Jeff Lemire and Sam Kieth.

AU: Tell us about your most recent project, *Drumsticks of Doom*. What is the story about?

JW: When Black Sabbath (not the Beatles) became the world's most famous band, the universe was

changed, musically and otherwise. Lost arts, like alchemy, were made common, schools taught about transfiguration and alternate science, demons were summoned, and some stuck around.

Lana LOVES music. She has played in bands all through high school and now, in college, she still plays in her ex's fledgling metal band. She's convinced their drummer to play her indie songs

in secret. She's finishing up the best practice yet when they are drawn into a spiritual battle to keep metal on the top of the charts.

AU: Who is the artist on the project and what do they bring to the table?

JW: Dan Dougherty is the artist and co-creator. I knew I wanted to work with a great artist, who also played music, and Dan checks all those boxes. I wanted to work with someone who could draw the gear but also knew what it's like to record music and write songs and play live on stage.

AU: Will this story appeal to metalheads?

JW: As a lifelong metal fan, I think so. It's definitely a love letter to heavy metal "lore", but when you're deep into a culture you also know some of the negative aspects of that community.

AU: How did you approach writing this comic?

JW: I am a note writer. I keep lots of manic notes, until the story starts to come together. It took me a long time to nail down what the heart of this story was, but now I have most of the major plot points in mind and it's just about getting there in each series.

AU: How can people help crowdfund your latest endeavour?

JW: Every back helps, but if you can't back, please share. People seem to think sharing on social media doesn't help anymore, but it's essential to small business success!

AU: What's the secret to launching a successful Kickstarter campaign?

JW: Hire amazing artists and be realistic with your goal.

AU: What can we expect from future issues of *Drumsticks of Doom*?

JW: This is the second arc of three planned arcs, so we are only halfway there with a lot more fun to go! Hoping to get two issues out this year and start the final arc in early 2026.

AU: Are you also a drummer in a band? What's the band's name and what are you all about?

JW: I don't play drums much anymore. The only band that ever got any traction was Anti-Hero (from Joliet, IL—not the one from Canada).

AU: Any of your comic projects you are trying to get produced as TV shows or movies?

JW: No active plans. If someone approached me, I'd be willing to talk, but it's too much energy to waste on a pipe dream.

AU: What other things have you been involved with writing?

JW: I was a writer-publisher with King Bone Press for a decade and I've been a part of over three dozen books. I have short stories in *Cthulhu Invades Neverland* and *Cthulhu Invades Fairy Tales*.



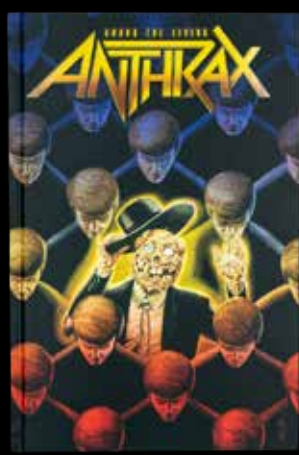
AU: Any advice for aspiring comic creators out there?

JW: Start small and do it all! Write, draw, colour, letter, scan, print, fold, and staple—beginning to end. Even if it stinks, you will learn SO MUCH about the process and have so much empathy for your peers in the future.

AU: Any other projects on the horizon or anything else to promote?

JW: We have five books scheduled for this year! Next up is *LCS*—a post-apocalyptic comic about comic collecting.

linktr.ee/Parttimecomix

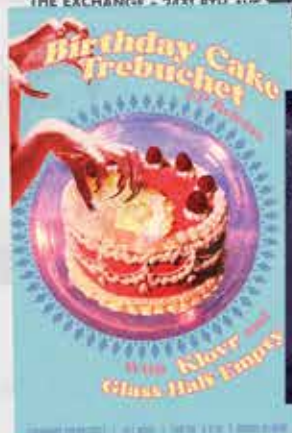
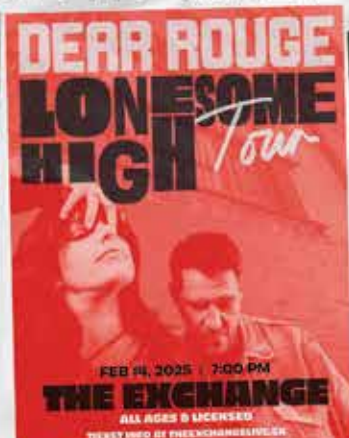
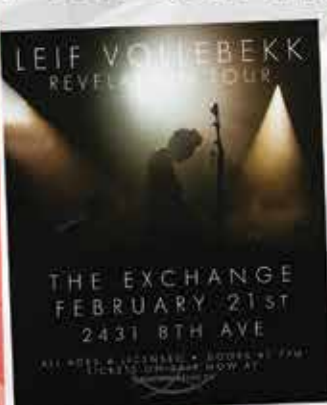


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Feb. 15, 5 pm Toaster Rocket (794 Fort St.)

(S)KIDS is an animated punk rock opera about a group of rebellious teens in 1993 trying to find their place in the world and question the authority figures in their lives.

BRING THEM DOWN

Feb. 7, 8:30 pm The Vic Theatre
Feb. 13, 7:30 pm Cinecenta

Christopher Abbott and Barry Keoghan are outstanding in Christopher Andrews' impressively intense debut about two feuding farming families in rural west Ireland.

TEACHES OF PEACHES

(Berlin FF Teddy Award Best Doc)

Feb. 12, 7:30 pm Toaster Rocket (794 Fort St.)

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BITE ME BAMBI

Eat This

Interview with Tahlena Chikami (vocals, guitar)

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous and or infamous for?

Tahlena Chikami: I love that. My name is Tahlena Chikami and I am probably most known for being the lead singer of the ska band Bite Me Bambi.

AU: What's the meaning of the band's name?

TC: It comes from the early 2000s Josie and the Pussycats movie. One of the characters says, "Oh bite me, Bambi." When I was a kid that was the movie that made me want to be in a band.

AU: What's the origin of the band?

TC: So we started back in 2018. Brian Mashburn, who is no longer with the project, but for a long time was our guitar player and one of the main songwriters. His band was kind of winding down. The band I was in at the time was also winding down. So we started writing together and we had such a great time. From there we were kind of able

to handpick the people that we wanted to work with. Which got us to our original lineup back in 2018 which was Ryan Brown on bass, Kyle O'Donnell on sax, T-Bone Willy on trombone, Mike Berault on keys, Dan Evans on drums, Brian Mashburn on guitar and then myself singing. We had that lineup for quite a while. Then things changed in people's lives and some people have dipped in and out but that's how we started.

AU: What was the name of your previous band?

TC: My first band was called Karate in the Garage.

AU: What's it say on the Tinder profiles of the other band members?

TC: That's hilarious. Let me go look them all up. No, I'm kidding. I guess mine would always talk about food I liked. I always ask people what's your favourite snack? I'm very food-centric in my life.

I actually know Edgar our saxophone player's dating profile says My job lets me travel the world, but it's not as cool as you think. Mike's, our keyboard player, would probably say I'm just here for the beers, man.

AU: Tell us about the latest tour you just did with Fishbone, the Red-

Hot Holiday Tour.

TC: We just finished that tour. Well, it's kind of funny the tour finished the day before Christmas Eve. But we played the last show this weekend up in Santa Barbara. It got rescheduled but it was originally part of the tour. We did the whole West coast up into Canada with Fishbone. Super fun, Fishbone has always been very kind to us and they've taught me a lot. People say, don't meet your heroes. I always say do because sometimes they're the coolest people. That's definitely the case with Fishbone. We also had Strawberry Fuzz and Damage out there with us. A very varied genre show, but all high energy bands.

AU: Tell us about your highly anticipated album called Eat This coming out on Feb 14th.

TC: This is our first full length record. We took five songs we had released previously but they never were on an album and then five brand new songs. I think it really encapsulates where we've been, who we were, who we are now and where we're going. I'm very proud of it. We kind of took the gloves off. I feel like it was a really a collaborative effort and I'm really excited for people to hear it. I think it's a little more punk and more biting. We're not really holding back on what we're saying.

AU: Any particular tracks you're stoked on?

TC: I really like *Bad Boyfriend*, it's the first single. It's just a really fun fast in-your-face song. Very reminiscent of Dance Hall Crashers, which is what we were going for. Also the song *Too Many People*, it features Dirty Walt from Fishbone and that's also a very in-your-face track. It's got a lot of funk elements to it. I'm finally getting to say what I want to say and getting things off my chest. I went through kind of a tough personal year in 2024. So it feels nice and cathartic to kind of get some of that energy out in a more healthy way. I'm also really excited for Gaslighter's Anthem. Which is a song that we co-wrote with Jason Hammon from Dance Hall Crashers.

AU: Any dating or marriage advice?

TC: Oh gosh, I'm divorced. Don't ask me.

AU: Any fetishes to share?

TC: I like being bossed around a lot because I gotta boss everybody around in my band all day.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

TC: Spending it with my dog in the mountains. My dog Molly, my true valentine.

AU: Who produced the record?

TC: Cameron Webb. He's done Motörhead records, NOFX records, Aquabats records.

AU: What's on the cover of the album?

TC: Well, if you want to see it, you can purchase the vinyl right now on our website. Plug, plug, plug. We wanted to go with kind of a Marie Antoinette inspired, but vaguely also Sex Pistols inspired artwork. It was done by Maria Fulan.

AU: Where is the band from?

TC: The band is from Anaheim California. Which I like to say is No Doubt country. It's where a lot of the third wave ska bands in the 90s came from.

AU: What are your career highlights to?

TC: I have three total pinch me moments. One, we got to open for Panteón Rococó at The House of Blues Anaheim for two sold out shows. They are an incredible huge Mexican ska band. The second would be, I got to sing with Lynval Golding from The Specials. We invited him up when we played a show in Seattle and he came and did Gangsters with us. I just started crying, I forgot to play my guitar. The third recently was Fishbone letting me sing Lyin' Ass Bitch with them during their encore on this last tour. That's something I've been dreaming about my entire life.

AU: How do you feel about music being used to platform political and social beliefs?

TC: I think some of the greatest music that's ever been made in this world comes out of political movements or oppression. I play two-tone ska. I think in

our ska scene today there is a lot of anti-racism, anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia music that's being made and I think that's amazing.

AU: Who's the best skateboarder in the band?

TC: Edgar, our sax player, hands down.

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Frank Dux

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Joel: This is Joel, and I play guitar and sing in the band Frank Dux! If I were to be personally famous for something, especially within my band, it would be how I am our “wet blanket” – but every band needs a father figure, right?

AU: What was your first introduction to music you knew your parents didn’t want you listening to?

Joel: For me, this would probably be *Dookie* from Green Day. I have a vivid memory of walking with my Nana through our downtown core singing “I went to a whore, he said my life’s a bore...” and let me tell you – it did not appeal to her old fashioned British sensibilities. After that, it probably really went downhill after discovering Blink 182...

AU: Where are you from and what’s the music scene like there?

Joel: We proudly hail from Cambridge, Ontario. It’s a small(er) city just an hour west of Toronto.

We seem to have always had things going on here, in fact the four members of our band all played shows together as teenagers in our former bands, only to reconnect like 15 years later and start this band. So, we proudly support our hometown! That said, we have lots going on in our general area. Events like the Long Weekend Band Crawl really showcase this, as they try to get multiple genres, ages, and all types playing mini-fests at multiple venues each long weekend.

AU: How did the band get started originally?

Joel: Scott (other guitar player) and I were

working night shifts together at a grocery warehouse and had many of those classic “we should jam sometime” discussions. Now usually these don’t amount to anything, but Scott meant it. He found a jam hall and then asked if I was still in. He recruited some other people he knew and we just were ripping covers for two hours twice a week. Eventually, we wrote our first song, and the rest kinda just fell into place. Since then, we’ve had a few member changes and Shawn joined on bass (who played with Scott in a handful of old bands) and Kyle joined up on drums (who we knew from our youth – but is also the drummer of the band Curbside).

AU: Who is in the band and what does it say on their Tinder profiles?

Scott (guitar/vocals): Head in the Clouds

Shawn (bass/back-ups): Smooth Operator

Kyle (drums): Yes

Joel (guitar/vocals): Wet Blanket

AU: Who is Frank Dux?

Joel: The real Frank Dux is a martial artist from Toronto with some questionable history (nothing untoward – just alleged to make up stories). BUT! We used the name because it’s Jean-Claude van Damme’s character in the movie *Bloodsport* and we are all children of VHS and ‘80s/‘90s action films!

AU: Describe your sound and live show if possible.

Joel: Fast and loud. With that being said, we all grew up with a wide variety of influences that we try to inject into our songs, we’ve got a few

slower, spacey parts and some heavier elements – but the default is fast.

AU: Tell us about the latest album you’ve



released. What can we expect to hear? Any stand-out tracks you are extra stoked on?

Joel: We have just recently released our first full length album *Product of our Youth* after releasing a few EPs. I think the title is pretty on the nose for what we’ve put out there. We reflected on our favourite albums, and used the songs we had written to create a love letter to those. So, you’ll find some choice samples, a secret song and all that jazz. Pretty much what you’d come to expect from the late-‘90s/early-‘00s punk rock records. Stand out tracks? We were psyched on the video we put together with Erik O’Neill for “Zack Verkerke, Your Beer Stinks!” and it also lends itself to the aesthetic we were trying to do with this album. He knocked that video out of the park. We can’t thank Tarantula Tapes, Thousand Islands Records, and Pink Lemonade enough for helping

us get it out in the world.

AU: Best advice you ever received?

Joel: “A rising tide lifts all boats” – it’s not always completely feasible, but do your best to support your friends, fellow bands, local labels.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Joel: You probably shouldn’t listen to our advice... maybe just listen to the record instead.

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Lunar

Interview with Drummer & Co-Founder Alex Bosson

By Asher Thrasher

AU: You're coming to Vancouver to make your live debut at Hyperspace Metal Festival, what can you tell us about this special occasion since "The members of Lunar have never all been in the same room together"?

Alex Bosson: Well, for the record; since I was quoted saying that, we have actually been in the same room. We got together about a year ago to film the music video for the new single, "Watch the Weather Change". However, Brian couldn't make it for that, so I guess, TECHNICALLY, it's still true. Anyway, to answer your question; it's incredibly exciting! I thought for a long time that the idea of this band playing live was just a pipe dream. It didn't seem like the logistics would ever work out. But, through a lot of hard work, we're making it happen! It's a bit stressful and takes a lot of coordination and financial support, but we are determined, and very excited, to make our live debut! I personally have played the Hyperspace Metal Festival three times before (with Helion Prime, Planeswalker, and Gravesshadow) and I absolutely love the atmosphere and the people involved in this festival.

AU: How has the band managed to write and record from all corners of the USA?

AB: It presents its challenges, but with technology these days, it's not as difficult as it may seem. It requires someone to really be in charge and have the full picture in mind. In this case, that is me. It makes it so I can coordinate and delegate the responsibilities to each individual person involved. I know in my head what I want the final product to sound like, so I just guide each person to get them there, and they trust me to do that. They're all incredible musicians and just bring their passionate, talented performances. It really works similarly to if we were all in the same room, but we just have to break it apart into the individual steps of the process a bit more.

AU: The band has been together for many years. Why has it taken so much time to get you all on one stage?

AB: It's really been about the logistics, scheduling, and finances. Everyone involved is a working musician, and some of us are parents as well, so even just the logistics of getting all that stuff covered is tough enough. Then trying to figure out travel, rehearsals, gear transport, etc. It's all the stuff that every professional musician deals with, but having seven members spread around the country, and all with other gigs and jobs, plus we have no booking agent... the coordination it takes is very challenging.

AU: You're releasing your fourth studio album *Tempora Mutantur*, what can you tell us about this album?

AB: I'm very excited about this album! The album is more thematic than conceptual in my opinion. It doesn't tell a story as much as the previous album, *The Illusionist*, did, but rather deals with this overarching theme of time. How time passes us by, our perception of it, how we cope along the way with things that make time feel faster or slower, how different people experience the same time differently, etc. As with the previous albums, I think there's the typical "Lunar sound" so to speak. It has the proggy dynamics of highs and lows, soft ballads to death metal. There are some more amazing guest appearances on this record. There are some new elements we haven't explored before like having harmonica and horns.

AU: We read Ed Bosson, your father, did the album artwork, how did this come to be?

AB: Yes! My personal favourite collaboration of all! I'm obviously a little biased. My father has been an incredible artist most of his life. There have always been amazing paintings of his around my house. So, it has always just made sense for me to convey to him what I want and have him paint the album covers. He did *Theogony*, *Eidolon*, and now this for *Tempora Mutantur*. He actually did four separate paintings for this album. I had the painting we used as the "Fall" image in my house for years and always wanted to use it for

something. After I decided on this album and the theme, I wanted to use that. Then he did three other paintings of the same image at other different times (Winter, Spring, and Summer).

AU: What's one song on the album you'd like listeners to walk away with a "Wow that was cool"?

AB: That's a tough question for me because I hope for that reaction for the whole album! Haha! I usually think of the albums as one piece and the songs are different chapters of one story. The individual songs may be revisited by people, but Lunar stuff is always written with the intention



of listening to the album as one whole piece. That being said; if I did want that for one song in particular, I suppose it would be "Fall Back into Old Habits". That song is probably the heaviest, most dynamic, and is definitely the longest on the album. It has so many different parts going on throughout it and, because of that, I think it can stand alone as a pretty epic song in itself.

AU: When band co-founder Ryan Erwin (guitar/vocals) passed away unexpectedly in 2018, it was a very hard time for the band. How did you make the decision to continue Lunar?

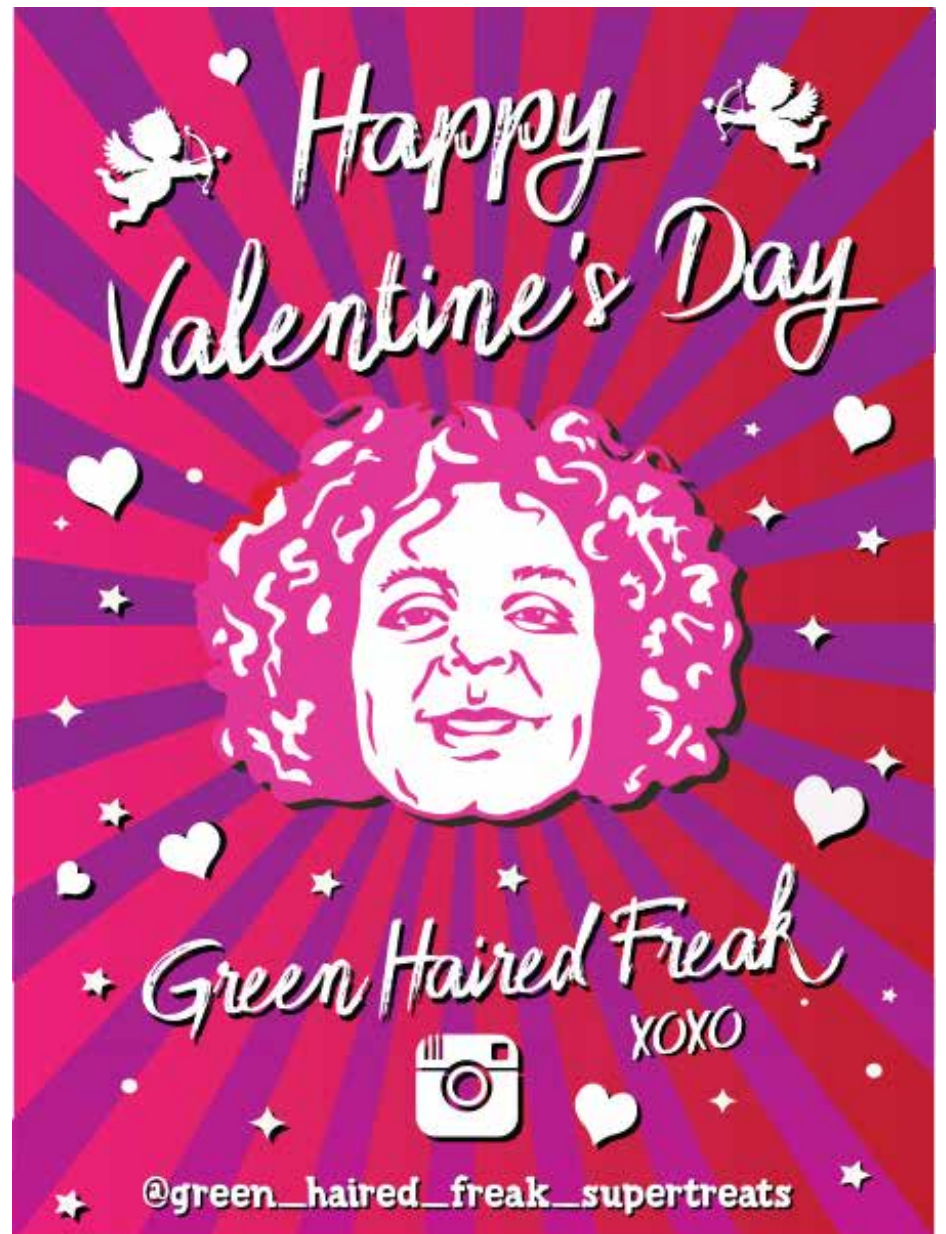
What advice do you have for others who have been in a similar situation? For those who didn't know Ryan, what would you like people to know about him?

AB: Ryan was a great friend, but a troubled man. I loved working with him on music. I told people sometimes he was like a musical soulmate to me because he could "finish my sentences musically" so to speak. I could explain some idea or mouth some riff and he would know exactly what I was going for. He unfortunately succumbed to his addiction and died of a heroin overdose. It definitely was very difficult for me to deal with. He wasn't just my bandmate, but one of my closest friends since childhood. I was on tour with a different band when it happened and I was devastated. I don't really have advice for others in similar situations. Losing someone you love sucks. I've lost many people in my life I've loved, not just Ryan. It's never easy. Just know it gets easier as time passes. The sadness of the loss becomes quieter and less frequent. Everyone has to find their own way to cope. For me, the coping was writing the album *Eidolon*, which is based on my grieving process of losing him. The different songs represent the different stages and emotions I went through surrounding it. So, ultimately, having that idea is what drove the decision to keep Lunar going and to do that album to both help me and pay tribute to him.

AU: What can expect from Lunar next? Anything else you would like to add?

AB: I hope the future is bright for Lunar! You can catch our live debut in Vancouver this April. I hope that this festival won't be the only one. I hope we'll be able to make it work to do some other live appearances. I really hope we can get over it and do some in Europe, as it seems to me that's where a lot of our fans are based. I've already started work writing album #5. I have the concept and most of the basic demos and lyrics done already, so, I would imagine, we'll maybe be ready to start tracking parts for that later this year. We'll see what else happens. No one knows what the future holds, but we have high hopes!

lunarbandofficial.bandcamp.com



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JEFFERY SEZ

Building Rafts Out of Burnt Bridges

Story by Michael Tension

Edited by Jason Flower

Jeffery Sez had two different lineups. The first iteration formed in 1990 when I joined an existing band that was looking for a singer. I talked them into using the name instead of whatever they were calling themselves and quickly got them to learn five of my own songs. We played a handful of shows, recorded a five-song demo, and broke up.

In 1994 I took another stab at it. This time I had a bunch of new songs and felt ready to try again. When the smoke cleared, the gang I had assembled was: Jai Joans - bass/vocals, Christian Down - lead guitar/vocals, Chris Hitchcock -

drums/vocals, and myself, Michael Tension - guitar and lead vocals. This was pretty much the line-up from 1995-2000, the first half of our ten-year run.

The music we worked to create was hard rock with the intensity of metal. It was quick and to the point, like punk. I wanted songs that sounded positive, but had dark themes lyrically.

It took us a long time to record and release our first album. We didn't release anything until 1999, almost a year after a 1998 recording in Nanaimo. It took us a full year to get out *Don't Stand by Dick*. Rocktoria was a compilation album that 100.3 FM The Q put out every year. The prize was recording in a pro studio, which was very expensive back in the 1980s and '90s. Four bands or artists would be selected each year to record three original songs. We packaged up a cassette with a bio and whatever else they required, and submitted. It worked. Jeffery Sez was going be recorded at

Seacoast Sound with Rick Erickson and put on *Rocktoria 2000* (the 12th album in the series) and we'd get some song spins on 100.3 The Q, which was something.

We had an album, two tours under our belt, and the Rocktoria thing. We finished our set for the Rocktoria show and Joey HIFI happened to be there. We let him know we were looking for a new lead guitar player and he wanted to give it a shot. Joel got a real trial by fire. He helped the rest of us grow up a bit. He also has a great sense of humour which made him a perfect fit.

By 2001, we were overdue for a second album. *Don't Stand By Dick* had been sold out for almost a year. We knew that we had to top our first record and that meant in both songwriting and production quality. I met Michael Burke, the owner of Cordova Bay Records, at an industry event. We needed to be moving forward towards doing music for a living, not living to play music. We decided to sign a deal. It was fair and we had nothing to lose from taking it. He was able to get us radio tracking, distribution of *15 Smiles to the Gal* which he would have re-mastered, and a new song "Plastic & Pills" added to it.

We asked for tour support from the label but were declined. This was a big disappointment since this was the main reason for signing. We were getting decent shows and good attendance, but we were not in a place where we could be self-sustaining. The band was still costing us a lot of money and what we earned had to be dumped back into the project. I was excited that Cordova Bay would likely carry the expense of our next record. To me that was a huge win. I'm not sure if it was enough for my bandmates.

By late 2004, I had 14 songs ready for a new record. It was our annual Anti-Christmas show



that we had done for the past five or six years. A few days after Jai let me know he was leaving the band. I remember being floored at the time, but looking back, who could blame him? It had been ten years. That exceeds the life expectancy of bands who actually made money.

I spoke with Chris and Joey. We agreed to meet in the new year to discuss Jai's leaving and what we wanted to do about it. We were the best we'd ever been and the future looked promising. In the first few minutes of the meeting, Chris declared he was also leaving and next Joey said the same thing. Jeffery Sez played their last show in late December of 2004 and officially ended in early January 2005.

The following week I was driving with a co-worker and the radio DJ said "...and here's one from the late, great Jeffery Sez..." followed by our cover of "Don't You (Forget About Me)" that Cordova Bay had released as a single over a year ago. I felt both proud and embarrassed at the same time. Still, it was a moment and meant to happen.

At the end of the day, this is a story of someone who tried to make it and didn't. I don't want my time back and don't regret a thing.

JefferySez.com

Real Sickies

Interview by Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Ben: Hey I'm Ben. Infamous... I guess maybe for keeping this going.

AU: Your new album *Under a Plastic Bag* is out on Stomp Records in March. Where does the title come from?

Ben: The title track is about a suicide pact, so "under a plastic bag" is referring to being inside a body bag. There's a lot of references to an "all or nothing" type mindset, I don't think is necessarily suicide from life itself though. From my experience it was more of certain ways of life. Like killing a part of yourself to allow another part to live, I guess. A pact to move onto greener pastures, whatever that looks like.

AU: When were the songs written for the new album?

Ben: We started writing just after *Love is For Lovers* came out in 2021. There was a major lineup adjustment around that time. So, we had been learning old songs while writing new ones. Every now and then, we would put a new one in the set and try it out for a bit. Things kinda kept creeping up on us tour-wise, so it took a long time to demo them and reconstruct the songs. It was a busy few years for us for sure.

With just under a month away from recording, we saw another lineup change due to our busy schedule. Which made us really focus on re-learning the new album. Some songs we let come together naturally at the studio. For the most part though, they have all been written and re-written over a few years. Different places gave new inspiration.

AU: What are your favourite tracks from the new album? "Destinations", "Paralyzed", and "No Refunds" are the first tunes that really grabbed me, though I am really liking it as a whole!

Ben: We had a lot of fun making "Paulie", it was originally a pretty short song. I had this riff stuck in my head and we explored the idea in the studio. Having some pals do guest vocals from around the world was neat. There was also a nice echo-y staircase at the recording studio so we utilized the sounds of stomping up and down the stairs. We found out we could get different frequencies from different heights. It was a good work out too stomping up and down a stair case for minutes at a time. We also used this old



transistor doodad that got this wild blown-out guitar tone on a few key spots in songs.

We like thinking of the album as whole, almost storyboarded in a way. Most of the songs as per usual have a few different meanings and views.

For "Lost by a Landslide" we had to head out to a community hall to record the choir. The was choir was just stoked to be on a 'rock CD'. "Paralyzed" was cool too, 'cause it was twice as fast originally and we last minute decided to slow it down and give it a slightly more teenage head feel. "Wild Imagination" was really fun to explore as well.

AU: When did you last tour Europe? Did you play with any legendary bands?

Ben: We did the two tours there a few months apart in 2023. Both of them ruled! We did one European and UK tour with The Real McKenzies and then we went back again later that year with Marky Ramone. All the shows were amazing. We got to play SJOCK Festival with some pretty rad

bands. We watched Cock Sparrer from the side stage, and that was an out-of-body experience. Eddie and the Hot Rods played as well, but obviously not original members. It was still fun to hear those songs live and the guitar player gave me his drink tickets. Best band we saw that weekend though, was Les Lullies. Not necessarily legendary as they are current, but they are amazing!

AU: Any crazy touring stories?

Ben: We stayed at this cool flat in England and tried to scare each other by putting large mirrors facing the doors. Then a ball oddly came bouncing down the stairs. Irish Rob from Exploited did sound one night. That was cool. The last day on the Marky tour there was a stinky fish and hot chip challenge... It ended up with a lot of puke. First day of tour they said we would die in Berlin. We didn't. They did show us

STOMP RECORDS

off in a good way by turning all the lights to red and white on stage and played the anthem before we went on, it felt pretty disgusting but it was also funny with bananas taped to the mic stands. I guess that's why they wouldn't let us on stage early...

AU: You are playing in Vancouver soon with two great bands, the Black Halos and the Bad Beats. Are you guys super excited for this gig?

Ben: I'm on the plane now for the gig and I have a bit of sinus infection, I keep thinking of the one time I landed in Halifax and the pressure made me shrink inside and want to scream from the pain. If my head doesn't explode from the cabin pressure, I think it's going to be a lot of fun. We are stoked to play with Black Halos in their home town. I've been a big fan since I was a young teen so it's a treat to do this. I'm also stoked Bad Beats got added to the bill. It's gonna be a nice night, I think. PLUS! It's at Rickshaw, last time we played there we had a terribly great review of the live show. We wrote the song "No Refunds" about it. So, it makes sense to debut that song.

AU: Any other shows (or tours) on the horizon we should know about?

Ben: We got our release show here in Edmonton that will be fun, we booked a bowling alley and it will be all ages.

AU: What's next for The Real Sickies?

Ben: We recently recorded a song for a local movie, I think we will be working on a video for that. We also have a few other ideas for music videos because we love making them so much. So that will take up some time. Plans are forming to tour this summer and fall and we are also itching to record some more music.

AU: Final words of wisdom?

Ben: Get sick or die trying
realsickies.bandcamp.com

Photo by Lyle Bell



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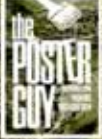


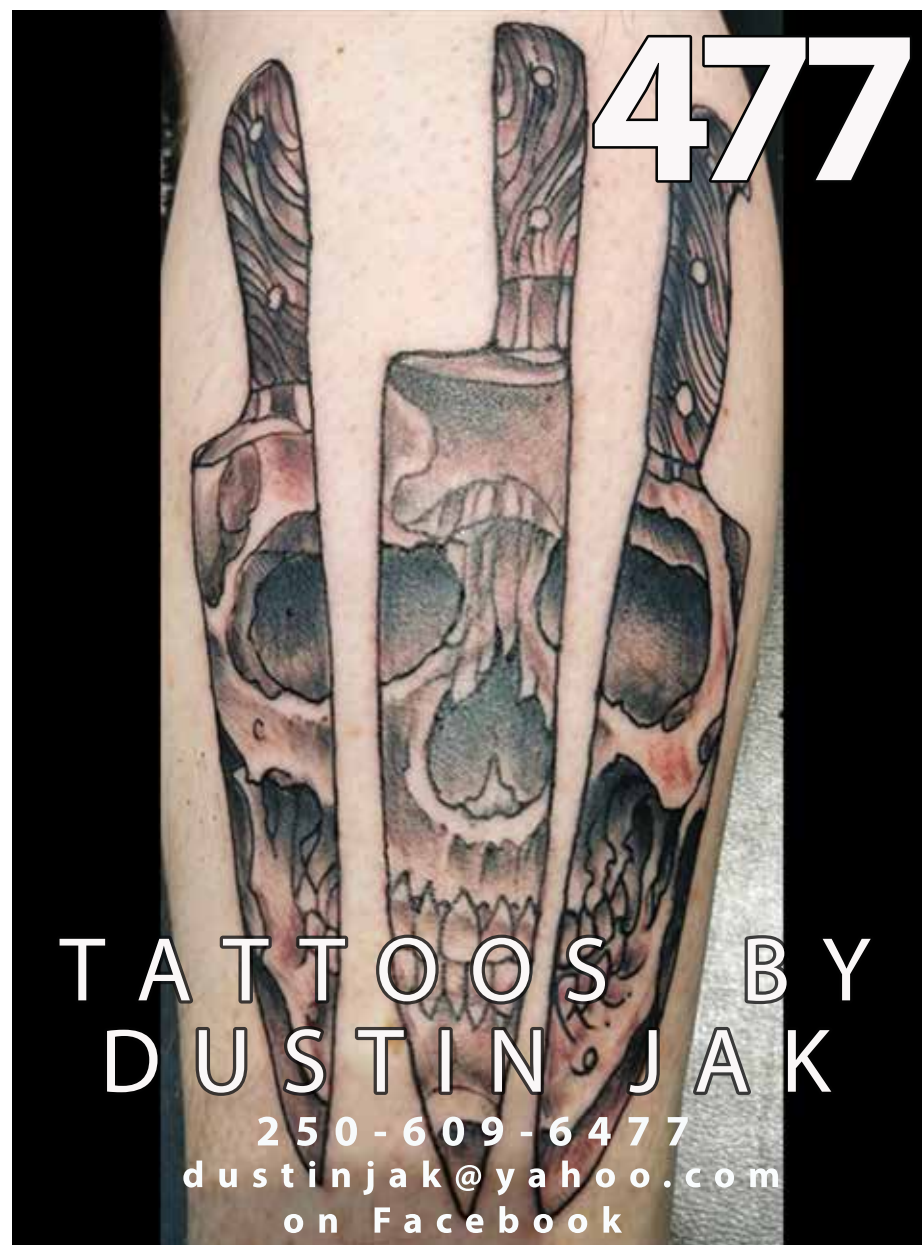


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TATTOOS BY DUSTIN JAK

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Slaughterhouse

Interview by Aeryn Shrapnel

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Meriel: You're talking to Slaughterhouse. Meriel on vocals, Taylor on guitar, Eddie on bass, and Nick on drums. We're probably best known right now for our song "Poison" which was released in 2023.

AU: Give us a brief history of Slaughterhouse.

Meriel: Slaughterhouse formed in 2017 by Taylor and Eddie, with Nick joining soon after, and I joined the band in 2023. As a band, we come from different backgrounds with varying influences, but we all come together from a love of punk and outsider music. Our songs are musically inspired by South Bay punk/hardcore, goth, and new wave. They speak to finding agency in a world that often tries to strip it away; and have fun no matter what.

AU: How do you approach writing music? Who or what inspires you most?

Meriel: We write all of our songs a little differently, but a lot of the seeds of our songs start as we're just going about our day. On our song, "Sick and Tired", Eddie and Taylor came in with a riff they'd been working on, and I had lyrics I'd been writing on her own time that seemed to fit right. We'll work on songs together, too, to fill out songs and to expand on ideas, but we're always thinking about music whether we're together or apart. We're inspired by a wide range of bands, like Black Flag, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Blondie, Bad Brains, Nick Cave, Rudimentary Peni, The Cure.

AU: Your new EP *Sick and Tired* will be out February 7th. What's your favourite track?

Meriel: It's hard to choose my favourite track, but I really enjoyed the process of writing "DNA". It went through a lot of evolutions; initially during shows I'd just sing the same line over and over

until I started to get a feeling of what the song actually wanted to say. I love being in the studio, and when we recorded it, I got to think of a lot of new parts and cadences I could go to in the song. I also have always had a soft spot for "Smiles", because the beat and structure are so funky. And I think we crush that "My War" cover.

Taylor: My favourite track off of the new EP is "DNA". It started out totally different and we completely chopped it up and I just love how it came together and what Meriel did to it. It's also my favourite song to play live right now. It just ignites so much energy with the audience, so it's really fun to play.

AU: The lyrics seem to have themes around oppression vs autonomy, what else can you tell us about that? Is there an overarching message you're trying to convey?

Meriel: I definitely like talking about the ability every person has to take agency in their own lives, and the struggles we might face to feel that truth. It often feels like the constructed world we live in pits us not only against one another, but also against ourselves, so we lose sight of the fact that if we come together, we can make real, concrete changes. I think the world is meant to be enjoyed; art is meant to be made... you can't separate the necessity of making art from being alive.



AU: Your video for the title track looked like a lot of fun to make. Any other music videos in the works?

Meriel: The video for "Sick and Tired" was so fun! We shot it at our friend Adam Garvey's studio, Blue Beach Studio, and it was directed by our other really good friends, Rye Beres and Nick Green. We had so many homies come out for it so it just felt like a big party. We just finished the music video for our next single off the EP, "DNA", directed by the amazing Angela Ricciardi! Working with her was so much fun, and she and her video synthesist, Clayton McCracken, made something that we're so excited to share with everyone.

AU: Will you be putting together a full-length any time soon?

Meriel: All we can say is ya better keep your eyes peeled!

AU: You've played with many well-known bands, including Alice Bag,

Pennywise, Social Distortion, Adolescents, Flogging Molly, Dead Kennedys, Alkaline Trio, Bad Religion, Amyl and The Sniffers, Destroy Boys... what's that been like?

Taylor: That has just been so surreal. I absolutely did not expect any of that to happen, even if I did always daydream about it. I'm just grateful anyone pays attention and likes the songs we put out, so getting to play with our idols has been the cherry on top. The best part is all of these people

PIRATES PRESS

are really cool and we've been able to learn from them by playing shows with them all.

AU: Who put your first instrument in your hands and what was it?

Meriel: I grew up in a very musical family, and the first song I ever sang was when my dad used to put me to sleep with the song "One Headlight" by The Wallflowers, and one day I just sat up in bed and started singing it. That's how I started talking. My first show ever was at my grandparent's retirement home when I was 11. I sang a bunch of Hillary Duff songs into a little karaoke machine and played everything I knew on piano.

Taylor: I grew up in a musical house too. My dad, grandpa, uncles, and aunts all played instruments and sang. I took piano lessons briefly when I was young and learned how to play [Celine Dion's] "My Heart Will Go On" because I was obsessed with Titanic when it came out. But when I was a teenager, my dad showed me how to play "Lude Boy" by Social Distortion on guitar and I fell in love.

Eddie: There were always guitars in my house. My dad played, my grandpa had guitars in the house, my uncle Ed taught me how to play old surf rhythms.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

Slaughterhouse: We're going on tour with Flogging Molly and The Aggrolites starting February 24th, going all over the south and ending back in LA- come and see us! There's more on the calendar that we can't mention just yet, but yes lots of touring this year.

AU: Plans for Valentine's Day?

Slaughterhouse: We're playing My Slutty Valentine on Feb 16th at the Echo!

AU: Final words of wisdom to your fans?

Meriel: Kiss each other!

sslaughterhouse.bandcamp.com

Photo by Max Marshall



Jena von Brucker

By John Carlow

My interest in photographer Jena von Brucker came through Kevin Hegge's documentary on the band Fifth Column (1981- 2002). I'm drawn to that formative '80s era in Ontario where highly original, creative music and 8mm film fused, with now infamous zines acting as DIY pipelines. Foundations for significant movements like Homocore and Riot Grrrl were given birth in this time, and Jena von Brucker captured the most authentic, honest and lasting imagery of these years.

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself and what are you best known for.

Jena von Brucker: I live in Toronto, ON and have for most of my life. My greatest, or perhaps most meaningful claim to fame was being born on the ferry between Glenora and Adolphustown in Prince Edward County. For this I became small-town famous. Otherwise, I guess I am known for

my connection to Fifth Column and my fanzine publications, The Jane series ("Don't Tell Jane and Frankie", "Jane and Frankie's Joy O Sex" and "Jane Gets a Divorce"; the first two issues were co-edited by Klaus von Brucker) And the Double Bill series with co-editors Johnny Noxzema, Rex Boy, GB Jones and Caroline Azar.

AU: When did you first discover photography?

JVB: My father fiddled around with photography. He was a real do-it-yourselfer; partly because he was smart, curious and believed that no one could do things as well as he could; but also, because he was pretty much flat broke all the time. I only gave it a try in high school; this was back in the analog days. We had access to a darkroom, and I messed around a little. But looking back, I have always been drawn to photography over other forms of art like painting etc. I can stare at a great photograph for a long time.



AU: What equipment were you shooting on then? Formal training?

JVB: I couldn't really tell you anymore. I got my hands on cheap or free SLR cameras and that is what I used. I think I had an old Canon and an older Pentax. I have never had any kind of training.

AU: Background in art?

JVB: Aside from high school art classes no, but I dabble in all kinds, mostly graphic design these days.

AU: Who inspired you?

JVB: This is hard to answer. I was so young! I was drawn to visual media in a variety of forms at the time, from fashion magazines to fanzines. My musical tastes skewed towards indie stuff. I can't point to a clear inspirational force, but clearly it was all being absorbed and ultimately informing my own aesthetic.

Fifth Column, meaning GB Jones and Caroline Azar and Beverly Breckenridge who were the core of the band, needed photos and trusted no one to take them. They were pretty protective of and intentional about their image, so how they were represented visually was high stakes stuff at the time. I was asked because I was close to the band, and I was not male (this factored). And for whatever reason, they trusted me with this really precious thing.

There wasn't a lot of ego tied to either the process or end result on my end, so if they wanted overexposed (which they always did), that is what I aimed for. The rest I just figured out as I looked through the viewfinder.

When I see those photos now, I am always surprised by how much I like them. I had no idea what I was doing aside from a basic understanding of what the different dials on the camera did. It was bare bones: some jerry-rigged lighting, no light meter or anything fancy like that. But the photos looked good; meaning Fifth Column looked good; and that is what mattered.

AU: Your connection to music?

JVB: In middle school/high school a friend and I were obsessed with Carole Pope, so we used to follow her around Ontario a bit, catching as many shows as we could. In high school I was friends with Barbrafish and Luis Jacob, who were really getting into the Toronto art scene and informing me about it along the way. During high school, a bunch of us made several issues of a wacked-out fanzine called *Salmon Hut* that was heavily influenced by whatever Barbra and Luis were into at the time.

I also started hanging out at one of Toronto's infamous dive bars in grade 10; just about the time I left home. GB Jones still remembers seeing me sitting at a table there and doing my high school homework before a show one night.

The back room of The Cameron House hosted live acts throughout the week. I occasionally relied on a fake ID to access such places, but mostly didn't need to. I saw Fifth Column, The Heretics, Human Interest, Bratty and the Babysitters, and The Nancy Sinatras. My memory is kind of foggy, but at some point, I also started doing the door (collecting the admission fee for the show) for a bunch of the bands who played there regularly.

Fifth Column bridged the art and music scenes, so they just kept popping into my awareness. I moved to Montreal right after high school. Fifth Column played; my friends and I all went; and things started to come together.

Klaus started to see Bruce LaBruce who danced for Fifth Column at live shows back in the early days. And I was hanging out with GB Jones every chance I got. I became immersed in the world of fanzines, music (and film, but more on that later). So many people I came into contact with were involved in one or the other; often both.

SHOOT TO KILL

Homocore and Riot Grrrl were movements generated and sustained by a bunch of creative people expressing themselves, influencing and being influenced by others in their sphere in a variety of ways including publishing fanzines, making art, and playing music.

AU: Shout outs to musicians, filmmakers and creatives?

JVB: Gosh there were so many in late '80s and the '90s: Johnny and Rex from Bimbox with whom GB and I co-edited Double Bill, a fanzine whose primary purpose was to compare and contrast two Williams: Burroughs (bad) and Conrad (good). And then musicians such as Lois Maffeo (Lois), The Spinanes, Bratmobile, Kickstand, Tiger Trap, Beat Happening, Kicking Giant, and Glen Meadmore; performance artist Vaginal Davis; filmmaker Sadie Benning and Candy who edited Dr. Smith.

In those days you would finish an issue of a fanzine at four in the morning, print out copies the next day at the local photocopy shop, assemble them, and pop them in the mail to colleagues and friends across North America. Those were exciting times!

AU: My exposure to your work is what you shot during the run of Fifth Column. What was your approach to shooting this band?

JVB: My primary goal was to take good pictures, to generate images that either matched how the band members wished to be portrayed or offered something novel that was appealing to them. This was achieved using very lo-fi methods. And perhaps the photos stand the test of time because there is nothing fancy going on. There

is a simplicity to them: good subject matter and decent composition.

AU: Memorable portraits?

JVB: I shot a series of photos of people I knew in various stages of undress, which appeared in "Jane Gets a Divorce". This was delicate work, but again I was entrusted

with it. Giving your subjects photo approval goes a long way towards earning their confidence and cooperation!

AU: Thoughts on social media?

JVB: I avoid it. Social media strikes me as an unimportant and uninteresting potential use of my time.

AU: Thoughts on current world where imagery is everywhere?

JVB: Yeah, it is all too much. A lot of things feel like too much these days. AI is also making it hard to know what is so called real and what isn't. I find that discouraging and worrisome.

AU: Whose work hangs on your wall?

JVB: I have several photos I have taken of my daughter hanging in various places at home. Otherwise, it is the work of others. A colleague named John Gross took these amazing macro photos of rust on different found surfaces (car doors, fire hydrants etc.) and I have several of his pieces hanging in my living room. I have a couple of my father's more interesting pieces hanging upstairs. I also have this great Diane DiMassa piece hanging in my bedroom. I think I bought it from her for \$50 when our paths crossed on a Fifth Column tour. My daughter has a GB Jones hanging in her room (from the Lollipop series), which is cool.

AU: What is coming up for you?

JVB: One of my photos is slated for inclusion in an upcoming show at the Canadian Museum of History: *Explosion! Popular Music in Canada in the '60s, '70s, '80s, and '90s* (opening June 2025 Gatineau in Quebec). And a photo of GB Jones and Caroline Azar appears in the soon-to-be-released gorgeous book by GB Jones, *Witches*.

All photography © Jena von Brucker



Guitar Hero: Metallica.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

MB: I currently live in Tampa Bay, Florida! The music scene is very welcoming! It's also the home of several legendary death metal bands like Morbid Angel and Cannibal Corpse.

AU: How did you get started playing guitar?

MB: I started by just noodling on it when I was 12-13, then I heard Metallica on *Guitar Hero 3* and I became serious about it! I first took lessons at 15 years old, which helped me grow a lot! I also published my first album at 16 years old. It's not available anymore, but it was still quite an achievement for the time!

AU: Describe your sound and live show if possible.

MB: My sound is a reflection of my personality: energetic but cool. I also like to make my live shows energetic and give the audience a chance to interact with me more. Positive energy poured into anything will make the audience want more!

AU: How do you approach writing music?

MB: I just pick up a guitar and play whatever I'm feeling. I don't think

about which chords I'm using or what band is influencing the riffs or the solo. Thinking about that stuff hinders my writing tremendously. I prefer letting the music flow. This applies to the lyrics too.

AU: If you could hire anyone to do your album art, who would you pick?

MB: I'm happy with the guy I chose, Regis Lima. He's a great artist and he also fronts an awesome band called Voxx, which I recommend checking out! But if we're talking about a guy who did album art for a famous artist, I'd pick Wes Lang. The cover of Avenged Sevenfold's album *Nightmare* is one of the coolest album covers ever!

AU: Tell us about the latest album you have

released. What can we expect to hear? Any stand-out tracks you are extra stoked on?

MB: *PowerCore* is my newest album and is easily my best album ever! It's the first of a genre I created called progressive powercore, which is a mix of progressive metal, power metal, and metalcore! There are of course djent influences and influences from other genres like jazz fusion. All the tracks on the album stand out in some way, so I'm extra stoked on all of them!

AU: Any plans to release another album in the near future?

MB: Yes! But that's further down the line. I have started writing lyrics but want to wait until my Aristides arrives to begin writing the music. Also, I want *PowerCore* to shine for a while!

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

MB: I will be playing shows to support *PowerCore*! Dates will come at a later date. Currently I want to start live streaming on YouTube. I used to stream

on Twitch and I would love to stream on that again too!

AU: Best advice you ever received?

MB: Never give up. My dad taught me that.

AU: Anything else to promote?

MB: My YouTube channel! I also now have merchandise available! All merch is now available on my band camp!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

MB: You can do anything that you set your mind to! If you need a little inspiration, check out *PowerCore*!

markobojkovicguitar.com
markobojkovic.bandcamp.com

IG: @

markobojkovicshredsguitar

TT: @markobaguitarist

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YT: @MarkoBojkovic-guitar



Combining progressive metal, power metal, and metalcore, Marko Bojkovic released what he considers his best album, *PowerCore*! Marko's blistering guitar solos, heavy and melodic riffs, harmonies, and uplifting yet thought-provoking lyrics solidify *PowerCore* as a must-listen for metal fans! The album is set to be a call to tap into your own power! Recommended for fans of Trivium, Avenged Sevenfold, Periphery, Dream Theater, Spiritbox, Symphony X, Firewind, and Kamelot!

Featuring Chris Thomas of Death Truck, Gabe Vermund, and Johnny Ray of the Mourning, *PowerCore* was produced by Patrick Finster of Doghouse Recordings, and mixed and mastered by James Lewis of Forerunner recordings.

Download the album at:
Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/album/715kyprGgVP5njJI6ojDFA>
Apple Music: <https://music.apple.com/us/album/powercore/1790965025>
Youtube Music: https://music.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_nZZR9Uv89z2ikmNx6Aj-WeVi6mzUjZk6DEsi=IGWIszoI7AKrq8A0

Links to support Marko at:
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Love Potion #9

By Lily Fawn

February is known as “the month of love,” and being a lover, I couldn’t be more thrilled to share with you some sexy herbal secrets for your Valentines. I am a huge fan of any holiday that celebrates SELF LOVE, so even if you don’t have a hot romance in the works, you can still share the day with friends, family, and, most importantly, YOURSELF. A dozen roses or a box of chocolates may be appreciated for a while, but if you really want your sweetheart to swoon, try some of these fun ideas!

Holiday of love party ideas:

- 1. Make a thoughtful note or card for your friends and family!** There is nothing quite as adorable as a handmade card. Especially if you are an adult, your friends will certainly appreciate the time and effort that went into it.
- 2. Make Pink Elephant Popcorn Balls!** Share them with friends! Pre-pop some popcorn and set aside. Melt butter and some mini marshmallows

in a pot. Once melted, stir in 3 tablespoons of strawberry Jello powder and mix. Pour this mixture over your popcorn and blend them together until all your popcorn is covered in pink. Roll into fist-sized balls and let them cool. YUM!

- 3. Tell someone you love them** and give them three reasons why. Then, do the same for yourself.
- 4. Plan a good old-fashioned treasure hunt.** All the time you spend planning shows your partner just how much they mean to you. Plus, they’ll have a blast following all of your clues to the prize.
- 5. Let your dog, cat, bunny (etc.) on the couch to snuggle with you for a day while you watch a movie.**
- 6. Clean the bedroom!** Sometimes, I even rearrange the furniture in the room to make it feel like a new space. Small changes can be exciting. Often, the bedroom can be a catch-all for clutter, rather than a sensual haven. Clean the bed sheets and remove electronics from the room. Maybe suggest that you read each other a sexy bedtime story or listen to an album.

- 7. Add fragrance to the bedroom and around the house.** Lavender and pumpkin pie (cinnamon) are two scents that are considered to be aphrodisiacs for men. Clean smells like cucumber, orange, or jasmine are said to be a turn-on for women. Find out what works for you and then subtly fragrance the home. Put a cute label on it, like “Marco & Lily’s Bedroom Mist,” and give it to them as a gift. Let them be in charge of when and how much they want to spray.

- 8. Have you ever seen commercials for The Clapper light switch?** It was popular in the ‘80s, and I still think they are marvellous. I often joke about it as I am falling asleep, too lazy to get up and turn off the lamp by the bed for fear of jeopardizing a comfy cuddle puddle. Apparently, they still sell The Clapper at Walmart and

Canadian Tire. Turn off the lights with the snap of your fingers, and then fall blissfully asleep in the arms of your loved one.

- 9. Call someone you haven’t spoken to in a while and tell them you were thinking of them.** This always warms my heart and reminds me that the world is only as big as we make it. Friends are all around us.

10. Make your own Love Potion #9.

These three herbs will help warm a cold spell, put you in the mood for sex, and get the blood pumping all the way to your pelvis.

Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) will warm you from the tip of your fingers to the tip of your... It is also a demulcent, which in Latin means to “caress,” keeping your body lubed up. Use cinnamon sticks or crushed, but not powdered.

Damiana (*Turnera diffusa*) is one of the best-known herbal aphrodisiacs out there. It relaxes the mind, helping with depression and anxiety, which are often the number one reasons for a lack of sex drive. Use damiana dried leaves, not powder. You should be able to find this at any medicinal herb shop, and if they don’t have the dried herb, you can use a damiana tincture. If you

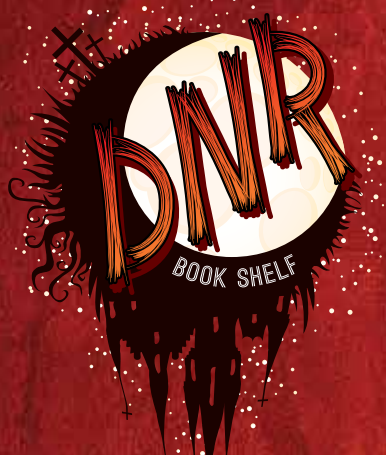
HERBAL WITCH

use the tincture, add four droppers full. Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) is all about the flow of energy, and ginkgo is your herb for that. It dilates the capillaries under the skin, increasing sensitivity and enhancing blood circulation to the brain and your extremities. Use ginkgo dried leaves, not powder, or you can use a ginkgo tincture with four droppers full. Add some dried orange peel and hibiscus flowers to your brew. The orange peel is uplifting to the mood, and the hibiscus is great for a zingy flavour while at the same time giving your cocktail a gorgeous bright red colour– the colour of love. Combine 1/2 oz of each herb listed above, along with one stick of chopped vanilla bean (optional), into five cups of water. Simmer on low for three hours, strain, and add 1.5 cups of honey and two cups of brandy (optional). Enjoy this as a mocktail or cocktail with your sweetheart.

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TELL ME PLEASANT THINGS



ABOUT IMMORTALITY: STORIES

Lindsay Wong
Penguin Books Canada,
February 21, 2023

This collection of short stories from Lindsay Wong takes a modern and confrontational approach to the legacy of the Asian-Canadian immigrant story. While trauma and otherness remain a key undercurrent, Wong ups the stakes by deliberately challenging what is palatable, infusing her storytelling with a generous helping of horror and taboo.

To introduce the assembled offerings is "Happy Birthday!" In which a ridiculously wealthy and morally vacuous family reluctantly attends their patriarch's birthday dinner, only to find him possessed by the angry spirit of a woman he had murdered. This tale wasn't particularly effective in drawing me in, but pushing through was made worthwhile by many of those that followed. The titular story focuses on an old woman, once granted eternal life after consuming a rare lily. Now she is a declared national treasure of the Chinese government, even while her physical body withers to a desiccated husk, dropping flaked chunks of flesh and various body parts as the years continue to pass and as others make the pilgrimage to attempt immortality for themselves. A favourite is "The Basket-Swimmers" whose narrator is a daughter too human to belong in the fish-like society from which she was hatched and against which she will rebel before meeting her ultimate fate.

Folkloric legend, a strong theme in Tell Me Pleasant Things About Immortality, is often viewed through a rosy and fog-obscured lens, but Lindsay Wong fights against that with her acerbic narratives which smack of absurdism and satire. Once I began to lean

into the vaguely unsettling cadence of Wong's writing, I found that embracing the casually grotesque made for a far better journey.

Laura Phaneuf

A FINE EVENING IN HELL



Kristopher Triana
Blood Bound Books,
February 14, 2022

Fantastic read by the award-winning Splatterpunk King, Kristopher Triana. It's a quick, fast-paced thriller that has a great wrap-up with actual closure many

horror books don't have.

A wrong place/wrong time story unfolds with an exciting exposition that immediately draws the reader in. Protagonist Heather, is out with her young boyfriend (with her ex-husband and son at home) for some fun. Getting mixed up in a hostage situation, things go sideways quickly. Career criminals Max and Bastion have no choice but to take Heather with them now that she has witnessed too much, including her boyfriend being murdered. She is forced to drive them out of the state and away from the issues at hand. A frightened Heather learns about the men as their tales blossom around her, she proceeds to have front-row seats to the violent wreckage they create as they drive towards their destination.

Triana is an expert at the nuances of character development to the point of caring about the criminals. Freedom is promised to Heather at the end of all of this, they just have to get fake passports and flee to Canada. Of course, this part ends up being the protracted climax with Nazis, shootouts, cop killings, and so much more that is so exciting your mouth goes dry.

Demonika

THE ILLUSTRATED FIELD GUIDE TO DMT



ENTITIES: MACHINE ELVES, TRICKSTERS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER INTERDIMENSIONAL BEINGS

David Jay Brown, Sara Phinn Huntley
Park Street Press
February 25, 2025

An absolutely essential guide to the wide variety of interdimensional beings that visit our realm. As Stephen King memorably wrote: "There are worlds other than this." So, for instance, the tricksters of myth and legend, such as Loki, could well be creatures from another dimension, interacting with us for their own amusement, well, if life does exist outside this realm, it would be pleasing to think such creatures had a sense of humour, albeit with the joke being on us! Elsewhere, the authors explore the concept of Gaia being the intelligence of our biosphere, a concept I do find easy to accept.

The authors rightly quote Terrance McKenna here: "It's always tricky to talk about the environment, because it is our mother, it is the matrix that sustains us. And yet all discussions gravitate towards the crisis that haunts it, generated by us, and how (hopefully) managed by us in a way that biological diversity and human diversity can somehow make a peace with each other, so that the glories of these domains of nature- and they are both domains of nature- are not compromised, one for the other. And...there's no dearth of current news on the front where this battle is being fought."

A very thought-provoking read and beautifully illustrated.

Steve Earles

THE DEAD TAKE THE A TRAIN



Cassandra Khaw, Richard Kadrey
Tor Nightfire,
October 3, 2023

I've got to admit that there are some instances where a book cover can colour my expectations for the content of the pages, and this was absolutely one of them. James Jirat Patradoon's amazing work on the front of The Dead Take the A Train enticed me in even more surely than the best of synopses could have, and the experience from there did not disappoint.

I first got a taste of Cassandra Khaw's writing with the 2023 fairytale horror novella "The Salt Grows Heavy" and found myself curious to see how their style would translate to a partnered endeavour. Richard Kadrey is something of a

prolific writer as well, though this is my way of introduction to his work. Kadrey ensures Khaw's elevated prose gets knocked off the shelf and rolled in the dust to give us the banged-up, grungy world of an alternate reality New York City, where the city's seedy underbelly teems with illicit magic and Wall Street investment firms traffic in human souls and infernal pacts (or, more-so than one might usually expect).

Julie Crews has seen better days, as any self-loathing protagonist in a destructive downward spiral can understand. She has spent years learning the workings of various dangerous magics to help in her chosen career as something of a "fixer" for demonic messes. Sadly, her employers tend toward the bottom of the barrel and when an old friend from her past appears on her doorstep, Julie is determined to improve her lot by clawing her way to the top of her profession—despite it being a profession that usually forces an early and permanent retirement. In the midst of her attempted climb, an egomaniacal ex realizes that Julie might just be a useful pawn in his own ascent up and out of the rank and file.

The Dead Take the A Train is packed full of demonic body horror, cosmic terrors, and an equally perturbing dissection of the human condition. Sometimes a vulgar romp of a story will sacrifice the quality of the writing to focus on the gore-spattered shock and awe, but nothing feels left behind with this one. It has been a long time since I've had this much fun with a read of any genre, and I am eagerly awaiting Khaw and Kadrey's promised follow-up. I expect the return to their meticulously crafted magical world will be just as gratifying as the introduction to it.

Laura Phaneuf

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Analog Era Gadgets Unearthed! Program Your Playback Machine Through the Power of the VCR VOICE!

By Josh Schafer

From the depths of the deepest, dingiest Goodwills and dusty second-hand shops, yet another VHS-centric gadget has been uncovered! It's the VCR VOICE from the Voice Powered Technology Company! This obscure rewind-inclined creation was yanked from oblivion by none other than my radical Videovore homie Matt Ridgeway! He was groovy enough to send me some images of this bad boy, and thanks to the world weird web, we're able to view the full paid advertisement



video and get down with the mind-blowing magnetic magic programmer that will revolutionize your rewind times, man! Well, it was supposed to, anyway! Now throughout the seemingly ubiquitous ownership and usage of VCRs in homes across the analog landscape in the '80s and '90s, there was one constant source of agitation and frustration with these home video playback machines: nobody seemed to be able to program them without losing their VHSht. The dreaded blinking 12:00 and the absence of the inherent time shifting aspect mocked the owner and left them with a VCR only available to play back slabs of entertainment and record on the spot. But the VCR Voice was out to erase all that aggravation and put the full power back into your machine with ease. As VV's tag goes, "If you can talk, you can program your VCR." Here's basically how it worked: The gadget responds to your voice for all of the essential VCR functions e.g. play, pause, rewind and fast forward. You just press a button, speak, and it obeys your analog command. In order to program a recording, all

you had to do was press a button, say the date, channel and time, and you're all set. Easy, right? Sounds it. But wait... what about those pesky commercials afterward? No problemo, Tapeheads. All you gotta do is call out the command "ZAP IT!" and the tape will FF through 60 seconds of analog tape automatically while you watch. Isn't technology insane?! But that's not all it can do. The VCR Voice can also recognize up to FOUR different voices, and play on two VCR playback systems. All of this, including your own personalized section within the remote that digitally displays your name, times and settings you've created. It even lets you know if you're too much of a Videovore and accidentally schedule two recordings at the same time AND it reminds you to load a tape into your machine when a scheduled recording is coming up. Damn, man... now that IS mad nifty. Dig it.

Of course, as with any newfangled gadget on the market, there were a few problems. In order for the VCR Voice to "recognize" your particular voice and personalize your section in the remote, you had to "teach" your voice to VV by barking out prescribed words shown on the remote's display. This could probably be a frustrating process for some, especially those who didn't have the patience for it. Another flaw was the fact that in order for the remote to work, you had to have the infrared beam in line with your TV. So, if you left it stuck down in the couch when you programmed something for later, and there's no beam connection, that means no dice. Other flaws such as switching to channel "five" when you said "nine" along with misinterpretations of background noise, or if your buddy asks you what time you're leaving and you shout "EIGHT!", the channel might change. Funny when it happens, but that could probably get old pretty quickly. Luckily, the remote had a "TV MUTE" button for that exact problem. Dig that.



Overall, for the time it came out (1992), this thing was pretty dang impressive. Proprietor and inventor Michael Bissonnette (who can't even program his own VCR!) solved his problem and many other analog aficionado's woes by using cutting edge (for the time!) voice recognition and fuzzy logic to make this gadget one of the most impressive and high-end VCR contraptions on the market. And for that, Michael Bissonnette, we VHSalute you! Wherever you are!

Oh, and here a couple of choice lines from the infomercial on the VCR Voice: A woman's testimonial simply states: "It doesn't scare you..." - That's good. That's real good, lady. Are you afraid of your toaster, though? And my favourite, spoken with extreme zest from an actor portrayal: "It's like a GOOD FRIEND!" And don't we all need good friends!? Especially ones who don't drink all your beer and know how to program your VCR?!

Indeed we do.

VHSide Note: Magnavox also came out with an almost exact replica of this product a little later, and both that knock-off and the Original VCR Voice remote are available online for about 10 bones, man.

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Last Call for Local Rock n' Roll By CJ Sleez

Last month, my hometown of Hamilton (Toronto's dark and gritty little sibling) lost one of its few remaining smaller venues for live music. The Casbah, a long-standing staple for underground rock shows, was closed to make room for a new condo development. It's the same story that has echoed across cities around the world for nearly a decade now.

Countless articles have been published about this increasing trend. The closures have been blamed on everything from urban gentrification and rising rents to old pandemic debts and wage increases. Yet the unfortunate and undeniable fact is that people are just not going out to bars anymore. If venues were still consistently pulling in good crowds, none of those issues would matter much.

Selling booze is the primary income for any drinking establishment, but even the admirable few patrons that are still braving the long arduous trek down to their corner pubs, aren't drinking as much when they get there, or aren't drinking alcohol at all. It's just one more item on the long list of social activities that are now considered unfashionable. First smoking was phased out, and now apparently drinking has also become passe. Times certainly have changed.

I saw a similar decline happen when strip clubs started dying out at the start of the millennium when porn became free and easily accessible online. After all, why go out to an expensive club when you have a seemingly endless variety of

raunchy entertainment options at your literal fingertips and right in the privacy of your own home? So... Why still go? The answer is simple; To seek out the one thing that the internet can never give you: real, 'in-the-flesh' social interactions. Something that slowly but steadily seems to be losing its appeal.

If "video killed the radio star", then I think it's safe to say that smartphones are killing the small-bar rockstar. We're in an era of anti-social youth culture. People prefer to type a short text rather than call to hear someone's voice and are more comfortable swiping through dating apps than heading out to meet new people. Social media platforms and internet chat rooms have replaced going out with friends to connect in person. I believe that we're gradually losing the candid authenticity of conversation and the subtleties of communication.

So, what does all this have to do with underground rock n' roll? In my opinion, A LOT. Local venues are where emerging bands stabilize their 'stage-legs'. It's where they get

tight as a group musically. It provides them with the opportunity to interact face-to-face with their audience and establish a solid fanbase. Bar gigs are the foundation on which great live bands are built. It's the blood, sweat and tears glistening under the stage lights that gives live rock n' roll its rough edge and credibility.

I've always said, "Playing one live show is as good as three rehearsals." It's a completely different vibe than jamming in a rehearsal space or recording in a studio. You'll never really know how good you are until you perform under the pressure of a live audience. For me, the up-close and personal raw energy of a live show is incomparable and the part that I've always found to be the most rewarding. Or at least it used to be.

From a front-person's perspective, it's a hell of a lot more fun to play for a room that is emotionally present in the moment and receptively engaging, than it is trying to connect with an already thinner crowd that stands around watching the show through their cell cameras. And while I understand that this in itself is a form of support and appreciation, it creates a virtual barrier that's tough to break through. Maybe I'm romanticizing the underground scenes that used to be, but it's a disconnect that I find difficult to get past.

For someone who's lived and breathed "sex, drugs and rock n' roll" for nearly 30 years, the sad state of today's scene is both frustrating and heartbreaking. Mostly because I don't see it ever fully recovering to its former glory. Now it seems that most people would rather stay home and save up hundreds to go see Taylor Swift, than to

pay a \$15 cover to support some local talent. It was actually beginning to make me a little bitter and that's definitely not the type of person I ever want to be.

So, after a low-key comeback of thirteen local shows over the past two years (three of which were at The Casbah), I've decided to pack in my mic, hang up my thong, and take an open-ended hiatus. We did have some great gigs over the past couple of years, but the atmosphere is different now, it's growing distant and more reserved. Honestly, I don't know where we go from here, but I secretly hold out hope that my recently founded cynicism will somehow be proven wrong.

CALL ME CRAZY

But hey, I still smoke a pack a day and occasionally drink more tequila shots than any man twice my size should. By today's standards... I'm totally 'cheugy'. So, I suppose that in this new reality, where traditional bars are closing, 'mock'tail bars are opening and all our life experiences are filtered through a cell phone, maybe I am a little out of touch. Call me crazy.

Photo by Jessie Taynton

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COMIC-GEDDON

Crowdfunding Part-Time Comix' *The Drumsticks of Doom Vol. 2*

By Ed Sum

When the talents behind the comic book, *Drumsticks of Doom*, are also musicians, this tribute perhaps inspired by Nirvana's *Rock & Rule* is awesome! Dan Dougherty (*Touching Evil*) and Jon Westhoff (Part-Time Comix) created a series which is very indie, and although this introduction has the feel of a starter project, I would like to know more. And to learn more about what this team had previously done, I found YouTube videos of Dan's concerts. And for Jon, all I found were interviews.

The good news is that they're committed to continuing the story as interest grows. At the time of writing, they are looking for supporters on their Kickstarter campaign to get series two finished. Thankfully, the system can accept late pledges, depending on whether the feature is enabled for the listing.

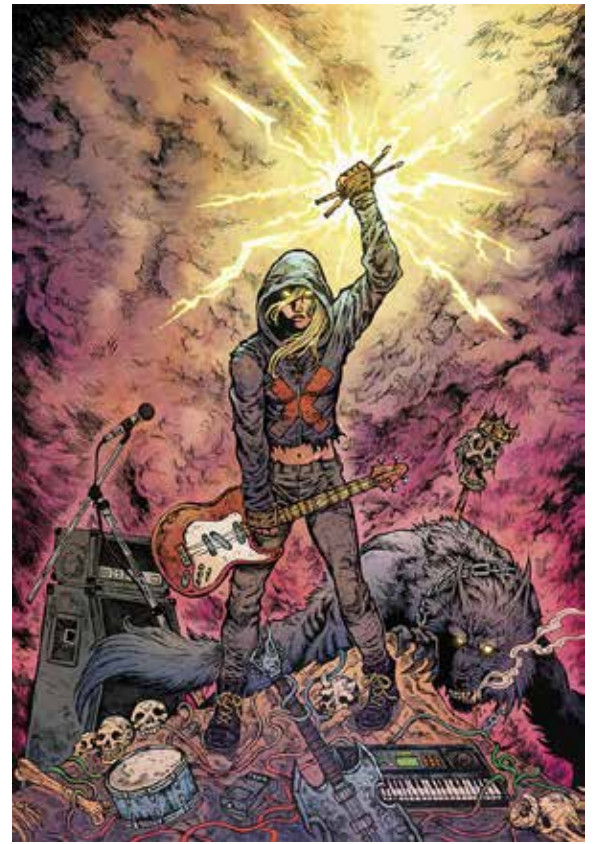
In this next installment, Lana and the crew are taking the next step in their music journey as they head to the mysterious Silver Mountain to record their first album. Their private recording session isn't so private when characters new and old start trying to get in on the jam session. Lana is losing her cool, when a mysterious voice calls her into the woods.

In this world, Black Sabbath became more famous than the Beatles. And in true heavy metal fashion, the music created a rift to allow the supernatural to come enter this world, and cause a strange cosmic imbalance. But for the people of this alternate Earth, it's possible to study the occult and practice magik!

But for Lana, this series' main protagonist, she doesn't seem to care as long as she can play her music. Although her act with Jimmy doesn't have local interest, without more people in their band, they can't make their big break.

In the first volume, they want to perform in front of an audience, but little things exist to set them back. That includes the drumsticks she uses are "cursed." Whenever they get played, the sounds will cause any nearby werewolf to rampage! Whether that is the case, these two have to find out. It's up to them to figure out who's causing bad voodoo.

While the mystery is like an episode of *Scooby-Doo*, what they discover and figure out seems like an incomplete tale. I suspect it's intentional,



as the events unfold more like moments to a larger plot. Just who Lita is and what she wants from up-and-coming musicians gets revealed at the end, and while this set of chapters isn't self-contained. The finale here doesn't have full closure.

I am curious about the deals that are going to be made, and when the devil's involved, it's safe to say this is no Robert Johnson story!

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BACKSTAGE PASS



Community Rock Shop

Interview by Shreddy Gnarwal

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are best known for?

Steven Munro: My name is Steven Munro and I'm best known for building culture in the underground through my skate shops, hosting events and shows around the city.

AU: Tell us how you started on your path as a business owner.

SM: Well, I never turned pro, so I didn't have another choice in my mind. Growing up in Victoria, we had to buy skateboards off the surf guys that

owned shops; there was no real skate shop in Vic. So, I worked up from slanging boards behind the counter to opening my own killer shops for core skateboarders.

AU: Tell us all about your latest endeavour.

SM: We have been putting our efforts into opening more spaces for live music, specifically for the underground culture. I've been trying with my partner Justine for three years now to get a music venue started in Victoria. I tell you it's been a lot of up and down dealing with landlords and the general city bureaucracy that comes along with this sort of project. Now after this long wait and a hell of a lot of work, we will finally be opening up Community, a rock shop in downtown Victoria. With a 100-person capacity. In collaboration with CUB, our friend Mike's initiative to bring culture back to the city.

AU: What's the music scene in Victoria like?

SM: The music scene is happening, but a lot of the clubs and venues are cookie cutters and don't offer a wide variety of different types of music. It just seems to me like the places in Victoria with live music have a formula that works for them and they stick with it. We are definitely going to do things differently; as far as the culture, we are building and the diverse types of bands we will be working with.

AU: What sorts of things will you be carrying? Is it true you will be the one place in Victoria where punks can get studs? Victoria desperately needed a Rock Shop style store.

SM: That is true, we will not only have an all-ages venue but a rock shop that sells

everything from band shirts to hair dye and yes also studs to finish off your jacket. I will also be creating clothing for our shops and local bands out of the art studio on site.

AU: Why is opening an all-ages venue such an important thing?

SM: For the culture, for the kids. Now more than ever, our youth needs somewhere that they can hang out with peers and blow off some steam. Just look at the state of our city. Every kid we can give a community and keep them out of the trouble that is the modern streets of Victoria, the better. In my opinion, that's one of the most important things we can do as adults.

AU: When will Community be open to the public? Any gigs or shows in the works?

SM: Saturday March 1st, 2025 with a fresh Pop Punk Party with live music from Chief State, Razorvoice, Halfway Atlantic, Danger Box and Joel Cossette. Doors at 7pm, music from 7:45pm. Emo DJ after bands until late. All ages, \$20 advance, \$30 at the door. Limited tickets available, so get yours on Eventbrite or buy physical presale tickets for \$20 flat until they are sold out at Influence Board Shop (3954 Quadra Street). Check out our Instagram for all the information on upcoming shows and events.

AU: There is also a theatre for watching movies? Any special screenings planned?

SM: Our new facility is equipped with a full stage, projector, screen and seating. We will be open to local movie screenings and special movie event nights throughout the year.

AU: Anything else to promote?

SM: Influence Boardshop with our indoor ramp and skate shop— check it out. We throw shows and parties and skate jams all the time.

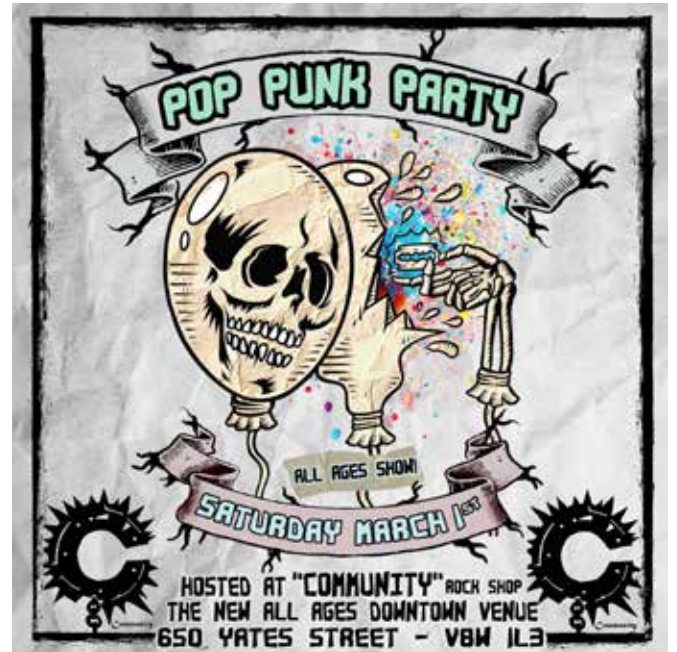
AU: Final words for our readers?

SM: As cheesy as this sounds, I truly believe that if your will is strong enough you can accomplish amazing things in your life. Doesn't matter if it's your first grind on a handrail or opening your own businesses. Whatever it is that you want to accomplish, just keep at it no matter what happens or what other people say. Life is yours so do the work you piece of shit. It will work out, I promise.

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Shame Banger

Seattle Post Punk/Empathy Core

Interview by Laurie Storrie

AU: Who are we talking to, and what's your role in the band?

Rowan: Hey y'all, it's Ro. I sing in Shame Banger, and also own the lyrics, booking and social media for the band.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band.

Rowan: Shame Banger was born in 2019, ironically out of the ashes of another band breakup. Scot Michael (drummer and recording engineer), Jimmy Eager (bassist) and I, who all kind of knew each other, had separately joined another band called Red Lektroid. When I chose to leave, Scot and Jimmy followed me, and we added a second Jimmy for good measure (Jimmy LaRue, guitarist). Eventually our Jimmies had to focus on life, so we added Geoffrey Thomas as our new guitarist (it's his first band ever!) and Bryan Mandronico (Javelin) to be our new bassist. And that's the lineup we have now, four of the goodest boys you will meet.

AU: Post punk is such a broad term, what are some of your biggest influences?

Rowan: Everyone in the band has a wide range of tastes, but we all seem to really like weird shit and funky time signatures, though we try to walk a line in Shame Banger that keeps things accessible. The shit I like that seems to show up in Shame Banger is stuff like Mcclusky, RATM, Jesus Lizard, and Every Time I Die. Scot is a musical polymath - he has done most of our songwriting, plays every instrument and says he's influenced by Minor Threat, Bad Brains, Idles, Mike Patton and Prince. Bryan is a fan of Primus, Sabbath and Phish. Geoffrey calls out Fugazi, Mastodon, and At the Drive In.

AU: You also describe yourself as "empathy core", what does that mean to you?

Rowan: I enjoy being kind of flippant about our genre descriptors, so I tend to change this at my whim. My goal is really to give people just a glimpse of the heart in what we do in addition to the fact that it's mostly "heavy music". All of our songs, whether they're about frustrating romantic relationships, community dynamics, mental health or politics, tend to have a thread of empathy running through them. Whatever the topic, if we can encourage people to humanize both themselves and others, I think we've done our part as a political band.

AU: It only takes a quick listen to realize Shame Banger is a very political band, but you also often have literature on your merch table. Can you touch on the importance of music as activism?



Rowan: I think there's this palpable tension in art and live music culture, where a lot of the point is catharsis and healthy dissociation- go to the bar, watch the show, don't think about the bad stuff. Live music is a kind of medicine in this way. And if you're lucky, you get to make and spend time with people you love and have a good time.

There's also this parallel understanding that throughout history, artists have been a prime vehicle for political messaging. And in the punk world especially, tons of bands tend to have at least vaguely political lyrics, on a scale from Bad

Religion and Green Day to Rage Against the Machine and Propagandhi. So why do I hear so often, "I hate it when people preach on stage! Shut up and play!" or "Don't talk politics at the bar, no one wants to think about that shit"? Why are we willing to SING what we care about, but not talk about it with each other? Why is the extent of political activism I see in our communities primarily "safe" things like fundraising for a particular organization?

Lyrics and fundraising are both WONDERFUL things to do, and more effort than most folks make, but I just feel like there's a huge opportunity we're all missing here. So, I bring zines about cancel culture and books about socialism. I'm still figuring out what I want my personal contribution to be, and what we can do as a band in Shame Banger, but I figure if I have some extra money, one thing I can do is buy things to give away. So, we do that sometimes.

AU: We also understand between your members you have in house graphic design, silkscreening, and a recording studio?

Rowan: Ha! Yes I love this, we are so lucky. Bryan works at a screenprinting shop as his main gig and is also an EXTREMELY talented Sci Fi painter. Scot has run a recording studio for over a decade now called Titan Recording Studio up in Shoreline, and he is very well loved as an engineer. I am a designer with a lot of experience in social media marketing, so I do a lot of our poster art. Geoffrey is just a therapist, totally not a big impact on the world or anything.

AU: You've been playing a bunch of shows up in Canada, do you find it a vastly different scene than in Seattle?

Rowan: OMG. WE LOVE CANADA. Seattle is an incredible music city with an abundance of venues, bands, talent and love. We have plenty of high energy shows with people smiling and dancing. But more often, people are cross-armed

UNDER THE OUTHOUSE

and nodding their heads in approval. We are kind of a suspicious and shy city when it comes to showing love at shows.

Lately, we've been visiting Vancouver, BC, thanks fully to Outhouse Records bringing us into their amazing family, and nearly every show has been an absolute banger. We felt welcome immediately, have met SO many friendly, outgoing, genuine and cool people there. People move. People grin. People mosh. And most endearingly of all, people will ALWAYS CROWD SURF, even if there's only five people to hold the surfer and they just walk around the room carrying the person. It almost feels like a shameless environment compared to Seattle.

AU: Though we are so close, the border presents a barrier for many people and their access to music. What are some Seattle bands you think our readers should check out?

Rowan: Punk: Zookraught, Dead Sonics, The Bitter (on hiatus), FCON, The Disorderlies, Dead Bars. Hardcore: Yellfire, Tremens, Picket Line, Cult Sickness, Filth Is Eternal, Shattering, Chopping Block. Metal: Great Falls, Kaizo, Nox Novacula, Nurser, Florida Man, Malversation. Rock: Black Ends, Miss Prince, Upwell, Karmic Unrest, Ten Miles Wide. Also the KISW Loud & Local show is a great place to discover Seattle bands across all these genres, the show recordings can be found on their site!

AU: What's next for Shame Banger?

Rowan: We're thinking a lot about our impact this year, politicizing some of our shows and I'm working on some zines. We'll definitely be releasing a new EP at some point, and we're working on a ton of new songs. We're kind of just chugging along with shows, really savouring the special ones. If anyone is in Seattle, come to the Kraken on Friday, March 7th for our show called "Let's Be Comrades" with Picket Line and AMOD from Denver.

IG: shamebanger



RIPCORDZ TOUR TIPS

As we've been driving back and forth across Canada for more than three decades, we've come up with some guidelines that help us on the road. Figured we'd share.

They're tips, not rules. Everyone has their own way of touring, but some of these may help younger bands on their way.

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TOUR TIP NUMBER 67



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TOUR TIP NUMBER 68



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TOUR TIP NUMBER 69



SOMETHING BUGGING YOU? TALK IT OUT!

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TOUR TIP NUMBER 70



STICK TO YOUR TIME ON THE SHOW SKED

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TOUR TIP NUMBER 71



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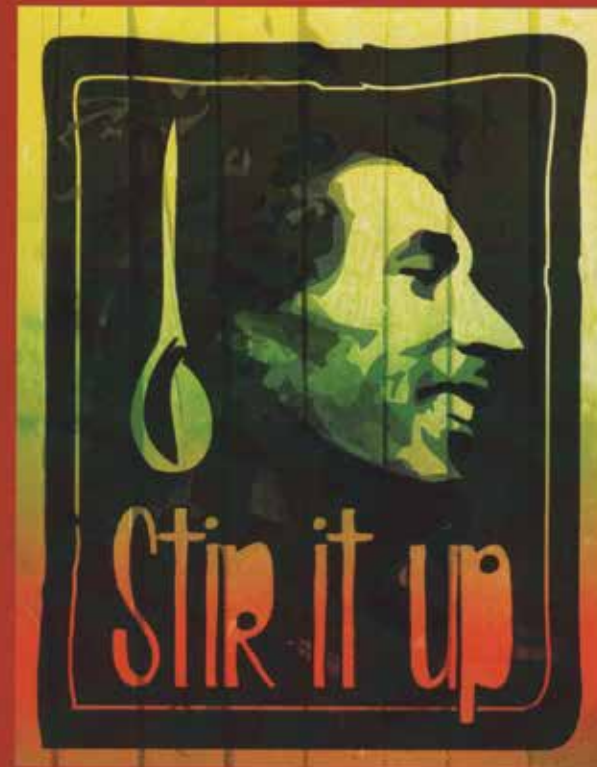
TOUR TIP NUMBER 72



DON'T FORGET THOSE DARN TIME ZONES WHEN PLANNING

...and the whole 'we don't do Daylight Savings' thing in Saskatchewan

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DREDGE THE RIVER

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Brent Glasgow Brown (BGB): drummer, ex-Vacant State (Deranged Records), In Stride (BottledUp Records), Citizen Grade.

Ross Redeker (RR): Guitar, ex-HERON, Tire Screech (BGVs)

Thomas (T): Throat. Disgust and hatred for humanity.

Russ (R): Bass. Local shredder.

AU: What was your first introduction to music you knew your parents didn't want you listening to?

BGB: I remember, maybe grade 8, being given a mix tape by my buddy Quinn. It was full of great punk bands - Circle Jerks, Screeching Weasel, NOFX, Pennywise, Bad Religion, Down By Law, AFI, Guttermouth, etc. I would borrow my sister's stereo and listen in my room on my bed with my ear right beside one of the speakers.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

We are all from the Fraser Valley, BC - Abby, Wack, and The Ditch. There is a great growing all-ages punk / hardcore / metal scene out here.

AU: How did Dredge The River get started?

T: Long story short, RR and I were Dredge The River when we were kids. Met again after a couple decades and decided the world needs Dredge The River again more than ever. Russ is a long

time friend and musician that was stoked to do a shit kicking heavy project. BGB was fate unfolding perfectly.

AU: Describe the band's sound and live show if possible.

RR: Well, we haven't played any shows yet. At least not with this line-up. As far as our sound?! That's a tough one. We all come from different musical loves and backgrounds so it's a mishmash blend of everything. But it's Heavy. Low, heavy like Swamp Mud.

AU: How do you approach writing music?

So far RR has been bringing songs, ideas, riffs, and then we all drink beer, mess around with the arrangements / song structure. Record, listen through the week, and then repeat until we land on something we are all stoked on.

AU: If you could hire anyone to do your album art, who would you pick?

T: Pushead, Karl Dahmer off the top of my head, but if it was anyone alive or dead I'd choose William S. Burroughs.

RR: Alive? My Boy Karl Dahmer.

Dead? I think Gustave Doré would do us justice

AU: Have you released an album yet? Any tracks you are extra stoked on?

T: We recently finished off a four song EP. It's on all streaming platforms. It's fucking heavy. It's got built up rage releasing. Couldn't be prouder of the boys. I'm proud of every song but Exi and Disabled are my favs. Old School, new life.

RR: Gotta say the 2 old songs EXI and Disabled are my personal favourite pounders.

BGB: Yeah, really into playing DAG... pure banger.

AU: Any plans to release another album?

Yep, we're writing new music so it's in process already.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

Yes. Check our socials for details

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

BGB: Stand up comedy

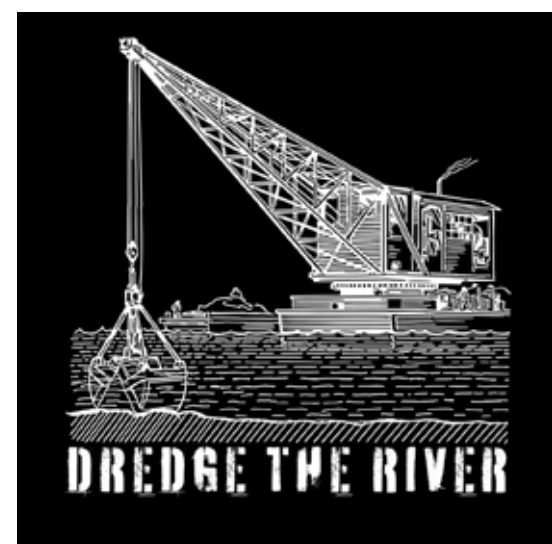
RR: Another day another dollar

AU: Any fetishes to share?

RR: Deaf Girls and Amputees...seriously.

T: Fishnets, high heels, bare knuckles and broken dreams.

AU: Anything else to promote?



T: I could possibly be starting a cult but if anybody asks "I'm just kidding".

AU: Final words for our readers?

T: Get a helmet. We're fucking pounding.

RR: Drink Up. Be Someone

AU: Where can people find you online?

Available on all streaming platforms. We are also on IG and FB.

Plus www.dredgetheriver.bandcamp.com



FEB 1 SAT

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 219
@ 8:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Roberts Creek, BC, Canada

FEB 4 TUE

The Dream Cafe @ 8:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Penticton, BC, Canada

FEB 6 THU

Capital Ballroom @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Victoria, BC, Canada

FEB 7 FRI

Rickshaw Theatre @ 7:30 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Vancouver, BC, Canada

FEB 11 TUE

Tractor Tavern @ 7:30 PM
Seattle, WA, United States

FEB 12 WED

Wow Hall @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Eugene, OR, United States

FEB 13 THU

McMenamins Mission Theater @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Portland, OR, United States

FEB 15 SAT

Talent Club @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Talent, OR, United States

FEB 16 SUN

Humboldt Brews @ 8:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Arcata, CA, United States

FEB 18 TUE

The Venice West @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Venice, CA, United States

FEB 21 FRI

Coach House Concert Hall @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
San Juan Capistrano, CA, United States

FEB 22 SAT

Keep On Rising - Records Release Party
@ 5:00 PM
Vista, CA, United States

FEB 27 THU

Mockingbird Theater @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Franklin, TN, United States

FEB 28 FRI

Zanzabar @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Louisville, KY, United States

MAR 6 THU

Thunderbird Café & Music Hall
@ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Pittsburgh, PA, United States

MAR 7 FRI

The Winchester @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Lakewood, OH, United States

MAR 8 SAT

Woodlands Tavern @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Columbus, OH, United States

MAR 12 WED

118 NORTH @ 7:30 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Wayne, PA, United States

MAR 13 THU

Tellus360 @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Lancaster, PA, United States

MAR 14 FRI

Mauch Chunk Opera House @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Jim Thorpe, PA, United States

MAR 15 SAT

Nectar's @ 9:00 PM
Burlington, VT, United States

MAR 16 SUN

Stone Church @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Brattleboro, VT, United States

MAR 18 TUE

Fallout Shelter @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Norwood, MA, United States

MAR 19 WED

Middle Ages Brewing Company @ 8:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Syracuse, NY, United States

MAR 20 THU

Buffalo Iron Works @ 8:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Buffalo, NY, United States

MAR 21 FRI

Warehouse Concert Hall @ 8:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
St. Catharines, ON, Canada

MAR 22 SAT

Adelaide Hall @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Toronto, ON, Canada

MAR 23 SUN

La Sala Rossa @ 7:00 PM
w/ Chest Fever Official
Montreal, QC, Canada



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R.I.P. David Lynch

January 20, 1946 - January 15, 2025

Red Curtains and Blue Lights

David Lynch, director, artist, visionary, musician, and founder of the David Lynch Foundation, died on January 15th, 2025, at the age of 78. Last year, Lynch revealed that he had contracted emphysema after years of smoking cigarettes. Lynch's family confirmed his death, writing, "It is with deep regret that we, his family, announce the passing of the man and the artist, David Lynch. We would appreciate some privacy at this time. There's a big hole in the world now that he's no longer with us. But, as he would say, 'Keep your eye on the donut and not on the hole.' It's a beautiful day with golden sunshine and blue skies all the way."

Upon hearing this news, I sat frozen, not knowing what to do now that David Lynch isn't here anymore. As a filmmaker and multi-disciplinary artist known for conjuring nightmarish dreams of unsettling beauty, psychic horror, surrealism, and romance, he is regarded as a visionary. I don't put many people on a pedestal, but David Lynch has impacted my life in ways that no other writer, director, or artist ever has. Throughout

my teenage years and into adulthood, he significantly influenced my development as a person and as an artist, leaving a lasting impression on my heart and creative spirit. The first Lynch film I happened upon was *Eraserhead* at the age of 15, and to this day, it is still my favourite. Then came *The Elephant Man*, *Blue Velvet*, followed by the *Twin Peaks* series, *Wild at Heart*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Lost Highway*, and *Rabbits*. I was smitten, to say the least. Captivated by his mysterious and experimental style of filmmaking, particularly his ability to blur the boundaries between dreams and reality, complemented by powerful soundscapes and otherworldly music, I have felt a profound connection with at least one character in each of his films, and it felt almost like a beautifully twisted form of therapy.

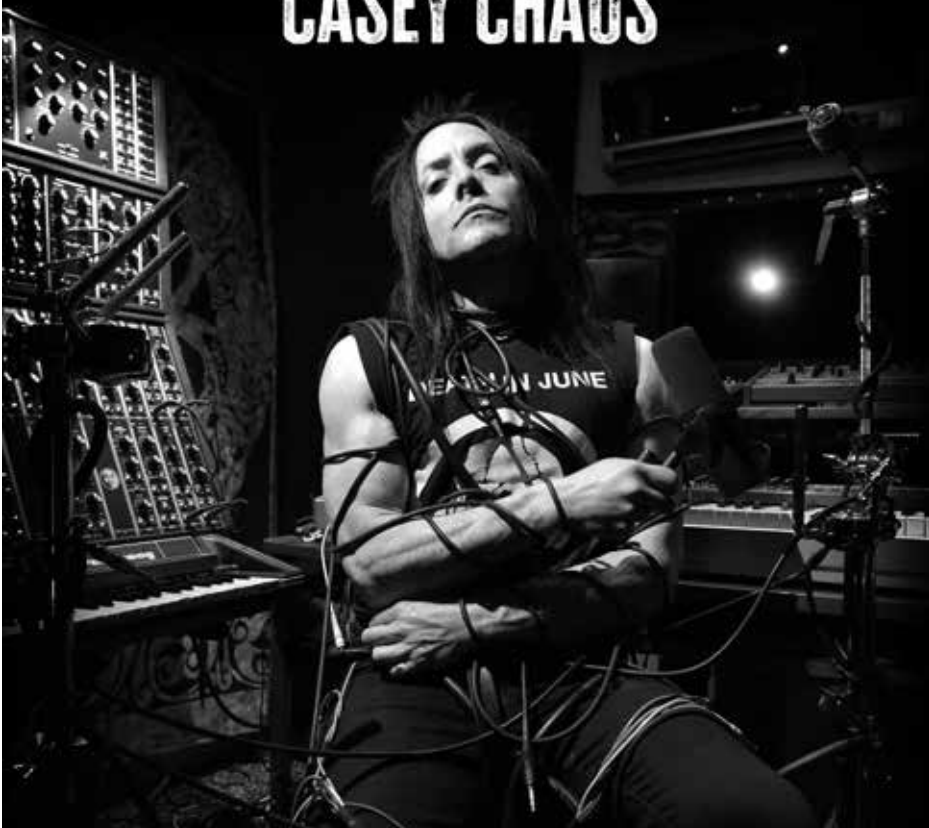
Aside from his many films, commercials, shorts, and TV work, Lynch also directed various music videos featuring artists such as Nine Inch Nails, Moby, Julee Cruise, and Interpol. He resonated deeply with music, and he was also a dedicated musician, producing solo albums and collaborative projects with various indie artists. He is best known for his soundtrack collaborations with his longtime composing partner, Angelo Badalamenti (Badalamenti died in 2022). In 2005, he founded the David Lynch Foundation with the aim of utilizing Transcendental Meditation, Consciousness-Based Education, and World Peace to provide every child, including at-risk populations, the opportunity to learn meditation for stress relief, should they choose to do so. Lynch was also an avid painter and visual artist, showing his work in galleries all over the world. He moved through life with whimsy and joy, and made art that was dark, vivid, and terrifying. He was so fucking cool. I feel a great loss, as many do. I sit frozen, not knowing what to do but say, "Thank you, David Lynch."

- Lily Fawn

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RIP
CASEY CHAOS



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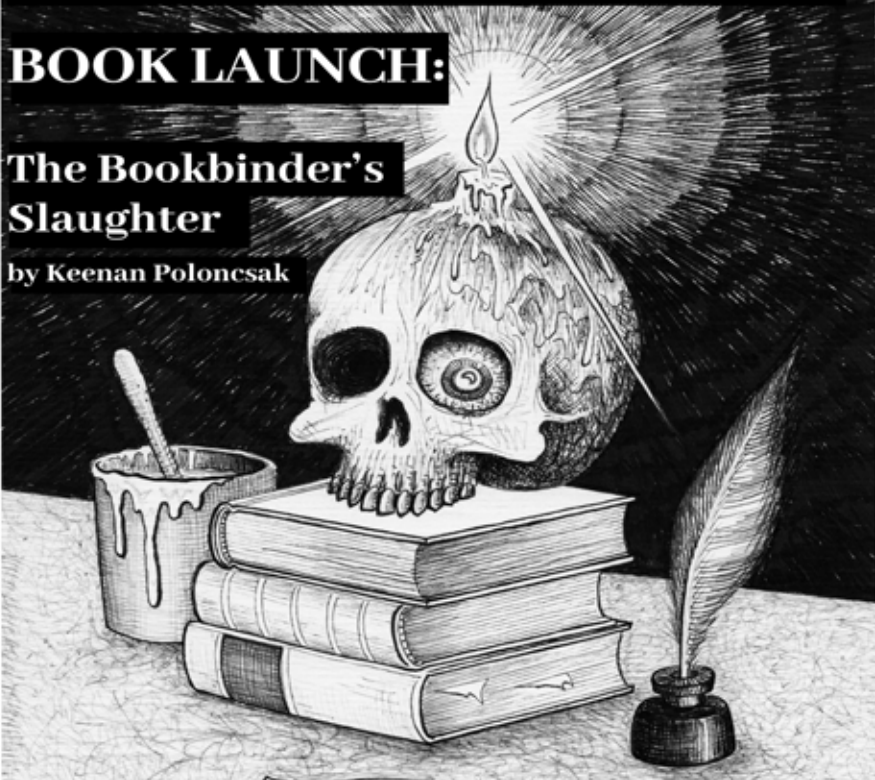
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Absolute Live



Buffalo Bud Buster, Buns, Hombre, Bearhorse

December 28, Dickens, Calgary AB

In between Christmas and New Year's came a new sort of special day— that of celebrating what it means to be, as the old *Trailer Park Boys Christmas Special* put it, drunk and stoned among friends and family. Brought forth by the

folks behind Electric Highway, the event brought the bands and folks together to partake in such festive activities. For a headliner, who better than the filthy Santas in Buffalo Bud Buster? Add in some steaming Buns at the bar tables, a couple of Hombre elves to pass out joints and a Bearhorse to ride into Dickens on and we've got ourselves a party.

Consider this show a sneak peek for this year's Electric Highway. My bet would be that Bearhorse and Buns will both make an appearance this year, with both band's performances making an impression on the crowd. Buns stood out in particular due to their jazz-influenced style with a cover medley of songs like "Gangster's Paradise" which smelled toasty and laced with weed when presented on the Dickens stage. Hombre greased up the atmosphere with Southern-fried songs like "Eat My Dust" that sound as nice as KFC chicken skin tastes.

Every time I see Buffalo Bud Buster, I leave thinking that they are truly one of the best stoner bands in the world and I should use this platform to explain why. Here is a band with all of the elements— musically, they are extremely tight and heavy— as heavy as some doom metal bands, though BBB links the heaviness with catchy songwriting— they don't stray too far off the rails and keep the train going. The chunky heaviness is then glued together by prophetic and easily understood vocals and lyrics, which are cryptic, intriguing and often playful, not unlike Clutch, making them easy to sing along to. Also, every song is a banger and on this night all the bangers, as well as

newborn bangers, were showcased and proved to me again that BBB are Calgary's finest hidden treasure and a diamond in the scene.

- Ryan Dyer

Kerry King, Municipal Waste, Alien Weaponry

Jan 22, The Palace, Calgary, AB

Calgary was on a lot of thrash touring schedules in 2024. The new year keeps the trend going with an event brought by the returning Kerry King along with Municipal Waste and Alien Weaponry.

King's band is now feeling like its own defined entity due to the previous tour and short passage of time, which has also allowed listeners to get to know their songs better. Although Slayer played a few festival shows last year, people have come to terms with the absence with members Gary Holt elevating Exodus with their string of concerts and King, with drummer Paul Bostaph putting out Slayer-ish enough material in Kerry King.

The set was by all means a headlining one, including length. I imagined one hour would be enough, so I have to commend King for really giving it to the fans, giving a 90-minute set that included



songs from King's debut, Slayer songs and two Iron Maiden covers. It does feel now, with the additional Slayer songs in the set like "Disciple" that his band may just perform any Slayer song Kerry feels like.

Municipal Waste were a wise choice for support, though tired the Calgary crowd out a bit before King, though this was in part due to the nature of their music, which is at times more frantic than even "Dittohead". "Calgary is horny for metal and wrestling," commended Tony Foresta before the crowd wrestled over another. After one crowdsurfer flew by Foresta, he

commented on a strange stench from their shoe, "First time I've seen a dog shit crowd surfer."

New Zealand's Alien Weaponry felt novel and got the crowd going to kick things off with their brand of Māori metal. The thing about culturally specific bands like Alien Weaponry, or The Hu, or even Sepultura, is that they are hard to emulate, unless the band is trying to mimic that style. Their style did contrast with the other two bands, though, so the ones who wanted to see them enjoyed it, while others didn't rate them.

-Ryan Dyer

Absolute Graphic Novels



The Bookbinder's Slaughter

The Bookbinder's Slaughter, a self-published graphic short by Keenan Poloncsak, is an intriguingly eerie independent gem. It experiments boldly with the comic medium, blending storytelling and visuals in a way that sometimes feels reminiscent of a storybook. The creative arrangement of text and images, along with stylized lettering, heightens the emotional tone throughout the piece, and while I'm not usually a fan of cursive lettering, in this case, it adds a personal, almost intimate connection to the narrator's voice, pulling you into their mindset.

The narrative itself unfolds like a dark parable, gradually descending into horror. Poloncsak balances the sinister and the grotesque with a restrained touch— the gore never overwhelms, but it leaves an unsettling impression. The rawness of the piece, compared to more polished professional publications, actually enhances its charm.

Something which makes comics special is their unique ability to communicate ideas and feelings, regardless of polish, and *The Bookbinder's Slaughter* excels in this. Poloncsak crafts both a unique narrative and an unsettling atmosphere, delivering a haunting tale that still creeps around your mind long after you've read the final page.

SnotGirl #16/17

Snot Girl, written by Bryan Lee O'Malley and illustrated by Leslie Hung, is back after what felt like an eternity on hiatus. And honestly? I'm

thrilled. I'm just glad *Snot Girl* gets to exist. It's a sexy, romantic-comedy murder mystery from the creator of *Scott Pilgrim*, but with its own unique, kaleidoscopic vibe. The story follows a fashion blogger and influencer with terrible allergies— hence the "snot" in *Snot Girl*.

I'll admit, *Snot Girl* isn't always my personal favourite from BLO'M's body of work, but it's still undeniably worth the time and money. Few comics can pull off what this one does. The art by Leslie Hung is stunning— you can easily lose yourself for hours wandering through the panels. It's clever, sharp, and occasionally hits you with real emotions— the kind you usually only see actors nailing on fancy TV shows. It's wild. With its return, the series kicks off a brand-new storyline. If you're new to *Snot Girl*, though, I'd strongly recommend starting from the beginning. This is soap-opera-level drama, with deeply entangled personal relationships. Jumping in midstream is like trying to understand a telenovela halfway through— better to start fresh and soak in all the intrigue from the top.

Ultimate Wolverine #1

Ultimate Wolverine, written by Chris Condon and illustrated by Alessandro Cappuccio, is competently written and drawn. It does its job, but that's about it. How many times can we see the same story told? A good soldier/cop/killer becomes a super-soldier/cop/killer, but—



oh no!— at the cost of his humanity. Eventually he'll triumph over the baddies and reclaim his sense of self by the end, while still leaving the door open for endless sequels. This book doesn't do anything original or exceptional with that tired premise. It kills off a few familiar faces, but in story set in an alternate universe, that feels weightless.

The art is fine but lacks depth. Environments are abstract at best, and characters feel flat, more like placeholders than people. This isn't a story about humanity; it's a story with vaguely familiar fictional figures going through the motions.

I just don't see the point. Why tell this story again? Why read it? We've seen this exact narrative

played out countless times before, and a handful of those were done better. *Ultimate Wolverine* isn't offensive or terrible; it's just uninspired, and in a crowded field of comics, that's the worst thing it could be.

-Hank from Golden Age

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Absolute Movie Reviews



Nosferatu (2024)

What makes the latest take on *Nosferatu* stand out is how bleak the visual landscape looks. He's drawing on traditional Eastern European folklore to make this evil come alive! Also, the Victorian world is bleak. One key element concerns the fears people had regarding change. The suffrage movement gained traction during this era and to make Ellen (Lily-Rose Depp) the focus, just what she represents is very important. She feels stifled. Ultimately, her relationship with the supernatural is why a new terror is about to strike!

Although she's matured some, that nightmare keeps on manifesting in strange ways. When she asks her soon-to-be-husband, Thomas (Nicholas Hoult) to stay, he doesn't. He has a job to do, and that's visiting a new client regarding the purchase of some real estate in their town. Part of the reason is that she doesn't want to be alone while he's gone.

Elsewhere, Herr Knock (Simon McBurney), has his own agenda to fulfil. He is this story's version of Renfield, and while the two are very dissimilar in personality, there's

enough exposition regarding why the line, "The blood is the Life," is important, and in this film, the way he communicates with the vampire is truly a lot more mystical!

5 Stars out of 5

- Ed Sum

The Wolf Man (2025)

Maybe Universal Studios should have stuck to having a board of directors who know their monster lore to at least keep ideas consistent when rebooting what's beloved from their classic catalogue. I love Robert Eggers' *Nosferatu* in all its nasty glory, but for Leigh Whannell's *Wolf Man*, setting this tale in the modern day is not for me. Not only is the story set away from the classical European origins, but also, in what I could sit through, the connection to the tribal lore said to have created the beast, is weak.

Blake (Christopher Abbott) is the latest victim to inherit the curse, and it doesn't happen right away. First, he'll have to convince his family to move, and I can't think of many people who are used to city life willingly move to a rural home. Despite settling in, I'm sure his wife and daughter, Charlotte (Julia Garner) and Ginger (Matilda Firth), will want to leave after all the terror.

Even then, what's presented is very lacking... and what's presented is more of a psychodrama. When I realized there would be no gore and acknowledgment about what's classic about being a Loup Garou (the French version of this Lycan), the urge to walk out of this film one-third of the way through was heavy. Joe Johnson's *The Wolfman* is better than this modern treatment. Although Whannell did a great job with his take on a contemporary *Invisible Man*, I suspect he didn't do his research regarding the tribal lore concerning why shapeshifters from



the Pacific Northwest exist. Not all of them are evil.

Instead of acknowledging the Kushtaka, a legendary group of shapeshifters, the ma'ingang odengwaan curse is used to explain the transformation. As a result, I'd rather look at other takes about Los Lobos (not the band) to get my study of why even the Navajo/Hispanic Skinwalker is just as fearful. Failing that, there's *Brotherhood of the Wolf* or *An American Werewolf in London* instead.

2 Stars out of 5

- Ed Sum

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Absolute Stoner Snacks

DORITOS - Late Night Sizzlin' Cheeseburger



Picture this: a tightrope strung directly between Delicious and Despicable, with these chips balancing on that line like they're aiming for Olympic gold.

There's always something funky about a chip, be it corn or potato, trying to emulate the taste of meat. It can be done, sure, but like bringing back dinosaurs to this modern age, we gotta ask ourselves if that dilemma is a "could we", or a "should we".

This combination of two of my favourite foods, burgers and chips, is like flying too close to the sun and getting burned. They hit the mark, then shuttle past it, into a terrifying new region of taste sensations, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond good and evil, into a realm of pure experience. I do appreciate the attempt to be something bold, even in its failure. It's sure better than bland.

At first, I gave these a 7/10 since I was digging them, while recognizing that they're not for everyone. But I do feel like I gotta drop a point for their noxious aftertaste, which stayed with me into the next day, making the final result a 6/10. It's a fascinating experiment, but I'm not left wanting more.

RUFFLES - Double Crunch Zinger Hot & Spicy Chicken



I only get two hundred words per review to tell you about the chips I've been eating, and it costs me 8 words each time I have to name Ruffles' Double Crunch Zinger Hot & Spicy Chicken chips, if you count the ampersand as a word, which I do. So, as quick as I can, here's what you need to know about Ruffles' Double Crunch Zinger Hot & Spicy Chicken chips:

They're damn good.

I ain't selling you no wolf tickets here; these are some powerfully enjoyable chips. The spice isn't too spicy, just the right amount of pizzazz, and the sensation of the double crunch is exceptionally pleasurable to my palate. The Ruffles' Double Crunch Zinger Hot & Spicy Chicken chips don't taste as much like Kentucky-Fried-Chicken as graphics on the bag would suggest, but they come closer than the Original Recipe Ruffles to emulating the fast-food fowl flavour in a favourable fashion.

I'm giving these ones a solid 9/10, no hesitation, no regrets. Ruffles' Double Crunch Zinger Hot & Spicy Chicken chips are a mouthful, in a good way. If you're headed down to the shop, pick me up another bag.

DORITOS - Late Night Jalapeno Poppers



Doritos Jalapeno Popper chips sound more interesting than they actually are.

I wasn't sure what a "popper" was, outside of a nickname for the sex-drug Amyl Nitrate, but for those we'll have to keep waiting for Doritos' line of Hunter S. Thompson memorial chips. In this case the poppers these chips seek to emulate are based on an appetizer that involves jalapeno peppers that've been filled with cheese, coated with breadcrumbs, and deep-fried.

Unfortunately, for all the glitz and glamour of the title and their admittedly good-looking bag, these chips didn't taste very special. In fact, they tasted like a more subdued version of a preexisting chip: the Jalapeno and Cheddar that's been readily available for years.

Doritos' Late Night Jalapeno Popper chips are fine for what they are. They're certainly not bad. They're just not remarkable, and I also noted that, structurally, the chips themselves feel thinner than most regular Doritos, making for a less satisfying crunch. So, it's a 6/10 - they're not an untasty chip by any means, but I just can't fathom what purpose Jalapeno Popper chips fill in a world that already has Jalapeno and Cheddar.

DORITOS - Late Night Fully Loaded Nachos



It's hard to judge something accurately when nostalgia is impacting your decision, and so I gotta admit that one of the reasons I love Doritos' Late Night Fully Loaded Nachos chips is because they remind me of one of my very favourite chips I used to eat as a child - a specific flavour of No Name corn-chips that haven't been around since the 1980s.

On account of that fact, I've gone full-in on these chips. Seriously, with several bags stashed around the house, I'm like a goblin hoarding bits of precious gold. The thing is, I know these chips are a limited time item, so I'm trying to keep them around for as long as possible, and I love them so much, I don't even need to eat them. It makes me happy to just see the bags sitting on my bookshelf and tucked behind my computer monitor.

These chips achieved that elusive 10/10 with me, possessing a specific old-school taco/nacho taste that makes them both delicious, and a pleasant trip down memory lane. Like a perfect afternoon during a childhood summer, Doritos Late Night Fully Loaded Nachos are something I wish could last forever.

HARDBITE - Turkey Stuffing Potato Chips



You ever sit down for a delicious thanksgiving dinner and dig into the turkey-stuffing, only to find yourself saying, "yo this tastes good, but I sorta wish it was a potato chip"?

These chips are exactly that. They're a solid crunch and they taste... like turkey stuffing. Like the spiced bread and veggies that are cooked inside the turkey's belly when the bird is in the oven.

Seriously, who asked for this? Who clutched their monkey's paw and made this request? Was it a bet? A dare? A joke? And if it is a joke, who is it on? Me? You? Society?

I will admit, these chips aren't bad; I've certainly had worse. They do taste like stuffing, but not overpoweringly so, making for a mild weirdness, like a sad clown standing out in the rain. Peculiar, but not exactly mind-blowing.

They're not bad. But are they good? Dude, I don't even know anymore. I think I gotta go for a 6/10, with the explanation that they're not evil, but there's no way I would've bought these if I wasn't honour-bound to deliver product reviews of weird chips to my special buddies. Hey, that's you! Thanks for reading, buddy!

- Hank Pattison



Crossword Answers

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CROSSWORD NO. 113

FEBRUARY, 2025

Absolute Album Reviews

Dirty Sanchez Orchestra

Dirty Sanchez Orchestra Independent

From the mean streets of Prince Albert, SK comes the debut album from Dirty Sanchez Orchestra. The lineup of Barrett Prokopie on guitar and vocals, his son Charlie Prokopie playing drums and Will Yannacoulas on bass delivers nine tracks of blistering yet melodic skate punk with just enough half-time breakdowns to drive your mom wild. Recorded, mixed & mastered by Justin Bender of Divergent Sounds, this independent debut is fast, heavy and gravelly, with the grit and practicality that could only come from a frontier-town band on the edge of the wilderness. Standout tracks "Society's Worst & Best", "Iris", and "Part of Your World" draw influence from Propagandi, No Use For A Name, and local legends Oswald's Walking Connection with lyrical storytelling, catchy riffs and hooks that will stay in your head for days.

Dirty Sanchez Orchestra's self-titled debut is available on Bandcamp and all streaming platforms.

- Tree Man Myk

Dirty Sanchez Orchestra

Dirty Sanchez Orchestra Independent

This one came out of nowhere. After listening to the first three songs, it is safe to hand the belt over to the new champions of Prince Albert punk.

The production on this release, by Justin Bender (Divergent Sounds) takes me back to my high school bedroom, blasting '90s west coast punk on my first CD player or skipping class to smoke weed in the back seat of an old Volkswagen Golf. The influences on this album are in no way subliminal, but they still manage to keep things feeling fresh with a tried-and-true formula.

The drumming on all nine tracks really stands out. With a bouncing pedal that would make Smelly from NOFX proud, the tight rhythm section and catchy guitar are a solid foundation for what are clearly well thought out lyrics throughout the release. This three-piece is relatively new to the Sask Punk scene, but are already making their rounds across the desolate prairies, playing shows regularly between the few cities in the province that have solid venues.

I hope this release is the first of many. With a start like this, I can only see good things for these guys in the future.

- Armando Copenhagen

No More Fun

Asspatch Poached Records



Saskatoon punk rock has had its ups and downs over the years, or so I hear. Admittedly, I have never visited the "Paris of the Prairies" due to an ongoing house arrest that prevents me from leaving the compound. Luckily, I was not deemed a flight risk, allowing me to continue volunteering my time writing articles that no one is reading.

From the sound of this EP, ol' Toon Town still has a couple tricks up the sleeve of its goose down jacket. Asspatch was formed in 2022 by ex-members of The Speedhammers. Straight up, fast and uncompromising punk with driving riffs and base lines, solid 350 BPM drums, ear killing guitar solos and snot-fuelled vocals—no filter.

No More Fun contains the first three songs from a 10-song studio session recorded in 2024. Produced by Savage Henry & The Illustrious Mr. LaFrench, this release has a real summertime, unemployed, drunk in the back of a van kind of sound that is comfortably familiar and surprisingly refreshing at the same time.

While the title track is the most aggressive offering on the EP, "The Last Day" stands out as a sing along ballad for welfare recipients and general scum bags alike. Not an overwhelming amount of politics in their message, rather a more straight forward, hatred for all civilization approach that can't be argued with.

Released in January 2025 for free on the Poached Records Bandcamp page, rumour has it, the rest of the studio session will be a contribution for a split LP to see the light of day later in the year. But those are just rumours. If you are in or around the Saskatoon area, you can catch them live at Green Room, February 28/25 with Dirty Sanchez Orchestra, Broken Idols and Old Tolerated.

- Armando Copenhagen

The Last Steps of Man—Unkind

Ani Kyd Wolf

Alternative Tentacles Records



With the release of her new album, Ani Kyd Wolf taps into the contemporary apocalyptic zeitgeist of our times. In collaboration with her writing partner, Marc L'Esperance, Ani and Marc have produced 14 songs that are bound to produce a visceral, gut reaction. The lyrics are original and evocative and will surely resonate with listeners.

It is tempting to call the album a political album, for it is an eloquent indictment of our times by treating such themes as war, gun violence, the current ecological holocaust, sham prosperity preachers, narcissistic lying politicians (Trump?), the violence of America, etc. Yet the album also includes an array of other songs, some of which might be termed "love songs," yet it is a powerful kick-in-the stomach kind of love, such as "Cyanide" and "Broken Hero," the latter speaking of the tragic circumstances of loving a partner who's addicted.

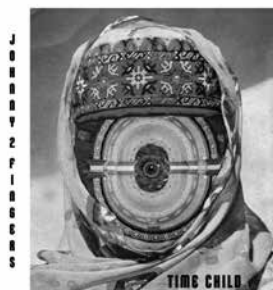
The Last Steps of Man—Unkind is an often musically nuanced album and therefore warrants careful attention to each one of its parts, but the rewards are great for the avid listener. All in all, it is a timely album whose urgent message invites the listener to share in the roller-coaster ride of emotions inspired by our contemporary era and gives voice to what many of us may feel but have not expressed.

- Erica Ostrowdzki

Time Child

Johnny 2 Fingers & the Deformities

Independent



This album starts out by leading us into a psychedelic rock trance with the intoxicating rhythms of "All in this Together", "Boogie and Bust", and "There'll be a Time".

"This is Love", introduces heavier riffs in Time Child. "Death's Door" brings out a bit of twang, which is reminiscent of the prairie roots of the band, mixed with the distinctly raw sound of '70s heavy-weight rock n' roll. We are promised "We will See You on the Other Side", but we are content to remain in the dark fog with Johnny 2 Fingers & the Deformities for an eternity. The chants in "Out of My Body" then lead the music lover on a wave of sound into the spiritual beyond.

"Master of your Mind" is a lyrical favourite with Johnny 2 Fingers serenading the crowd with the carefully crafted words, "Another bloody Sunday morning, paper in her hand, she takes a sip of coffee, and pretends to understand, the atrocities and madness that always seem hand in hand, the decadence of power will crumble in the end, so GET UP".

Johnny 2 Fingers truly channels his inner Ozzy Osbourne in "Master of your Mind"—leaving the listener to remember "to never let those bastards get you down".

- Kip Phillips

Tomb of Sand

Bayonet Dismemberment

From the onset chanting and gunfire of "Danger Close", into samples of political voices announcing hostilities... the EP is off to a slamming start. The band has chosen 1991's invasion of Iraq—"Operation Desert Storm"—as the locus to explore themes of violence and humanity; to frame up the death metal riffage. Impressive, sharp, playing from Vancouver death metallers. Particularly enjoyed choppy riffs in "Detonation". Kind of music to be seen and felt live and 3D versus headphones (what I had available). Curious to see other war themes, battles, and sound samples—where the band will explore in the future. Also curious to hear more about the connection with this conflict, how the songs came to be. Such is the mystery of listening.

- Erik Lindholm

To Shoot Another Day

Rosalie Cunningham

Cherry Red Records

It's always a pleasure to review a Rosalie Cunningham record, for she always sounds like herself, never any other artist, thus there is never the tedious comparisons with other acts you have to do reviewing so many other records.

Rosalie is a truly gifted singer, with a unique beautiful voice, and a talented multi-instrumentalist to boot, so what you hear is uniquely her.

Where she most scores is in the song-writing department, her songs are unique, wonderful observations of the world around her and her feelings about it.

Good music should take you on an adventure, to places you have never been before, and with *To Shoot Another Day*, Rosalie delivers this gift in abundance.

- Steve Earles

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SAVAGE BEAT
'Singles 2018-2022' 12" LP

LONGSHOT MUSIC



Poached Records

By Martin Splatterpants

"My wife and I were happy for 20 years. Then we met." - Rodney Dangerfield

We don't celebrate Valentine's Day where we live. Hidden inside the depths of an active volcano, the tyrants from Poached Records sit on thrones constructed from the bones of their enemies, counting all their riches, eating albino sturgeon caviar, laughing maniacally, plotting their next attack. 2025 is coming in hot.

With two new releases currently in production and two more bangers on deck, we are putting in a relatively modest attempt at making sure this year is a loud one. Both of these tapes would make phenomenal first date soundtracks.

THALIDOMIDE CHILDRUN

Audio Laxative

(*release date: Feb. 2025 // limited to 66 copies on septic green cassettes)

19 tracks of raw chaos recorded in Tim's basement. This is Saskatoon punk history at it's peak performance. Featuring members of Nation of Waste, Oswald's Walking Connection, Savage Henry and the Infamous One Pounders, Rehased, Robster Kraws... etc.

Songs about booze, mail-order brides and a general distaste for society, the recording dates back to 1998. Lo-fi enough to remind you it is a basement recording from almost three decades

ago, but still retaining its brilliant, not a drop of protocols, analog nostalgia. This tape has sat on a shelf, patiently waiting to once again torment the ears and brains of any poser that is caught in the crosshairs. The original recipe for hardcore punk was followed precisely while creating this masterpiece.

Dual vocals and unique riffs, alongside tight as an asshole percussion made this band stand out among the rest. Back when words didn't hurt and cigarettes were \$5 a pack. Like a time machine to better days, I can still hear the sound of the stop button on the beer soaked Tascam 4-track.

TRENCHRAID/MISERABLE TRADITION/BITTER STATE/PIZZA COFFIN

Live at Black Cat Tavern 4-way split

(*release date: March 2025 // limited to 100 copies on nuclear red cassettes)

All songs recorded live at Black Cat Tavern (Saskatoon, SK) in 2024 by Mr. LaFrench. A bunch of friends decided to make a tape and the result is a small taste of top-tier Canadian punk. This release has a little something for everyone, and if you find that you don't enjoy any of it, fuck you. We like it.

Miserable Tradition start the split off with some raw crust core. If State of Fear *Wallow in Squalor* and Agathocles *To Serve... To Protect* got mixed up in a jug of Royal Red, everyone got drunk, then someone puked it up on the rocks by the Broadway bridge.

Trenchraid finishes off the first side with a complete onslaught of shredding d-beat from the Sunshine Coast. If you haven't heard these folks yet, you have been living under a rock. Get your priorities straight. Trenchraid is absolutely killing it and this set was no exception. There is nothing to not like about this band. It's a fucking good time, and if you didn't already know, screaming good guys!

Self proclaimed "Mince Punk Pepperoni Power Violence" Pizza Coffin blasts through 10 tracks in 12 minutes to kick off Side B. Heavily influenced by the likes of '90s punk and power violence bands FYP and SPAZZ (the entire *Pigs Suck* and *Possessed To Skate* Comps)

Last but far from least, members of Poser Disposer, Rehased, Mechanical Separation, Me the Guts, and Strike Force. Bitter State from Saskatoon ends the four-way with a bang. Hardcore punk veterans (that just means they are old) deliver a devastating set of their signature tight as fuck style of audio obliteration. These guys also have a split LP with Pizza Coffin set to go to production later this year. All studio tracks from both camps. Derek E. stole my bike.

You can find us on Bandcamp and other internet locations by searching Poached Records. For bootleg files, trades and all other inquiries, email: poachedrecords@gmail.com



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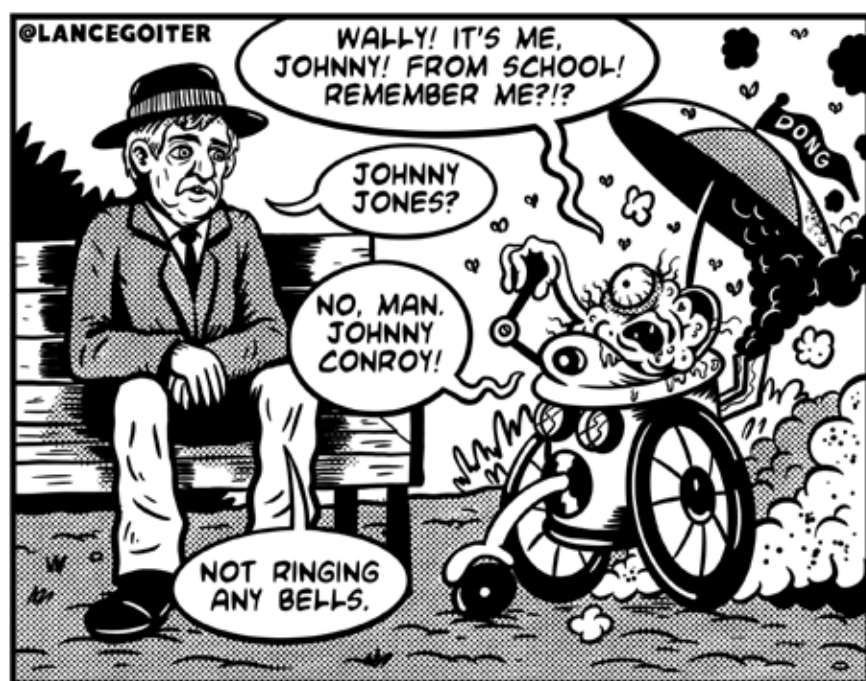
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SUM 41: Tour Of The Setting Sum

SUM 41, PUP, GOB

Jan 10th, 2025

Save-On Memorial Arena - Victoria, BC

Presented by Live Nation

Sum 41 kicked off their Tour Of The Setting Sum in Victoria accompanied by Pup, and Gob. This is the final Sum 41 headlining tour ever and ended with 2 shows in Toronto and will culminate with a final performance at the Juno Awards. Word on the street is that singer Deryck Whibley is hanging up his mic to explore new endeavours. What will he get up to I wonder? Perhaps he will start up a miniature lama farm or go all in on his own brand of longer lasting hair gel products? The world will have to wait and see...

Back to the show. Hung out and did an interview with Gob before the show. They were all fighting over who was going to get to keep a copy of the latest issue of Absolute Underground. Thanks to Tom

for helping me get my Sum 41 CDs signed.

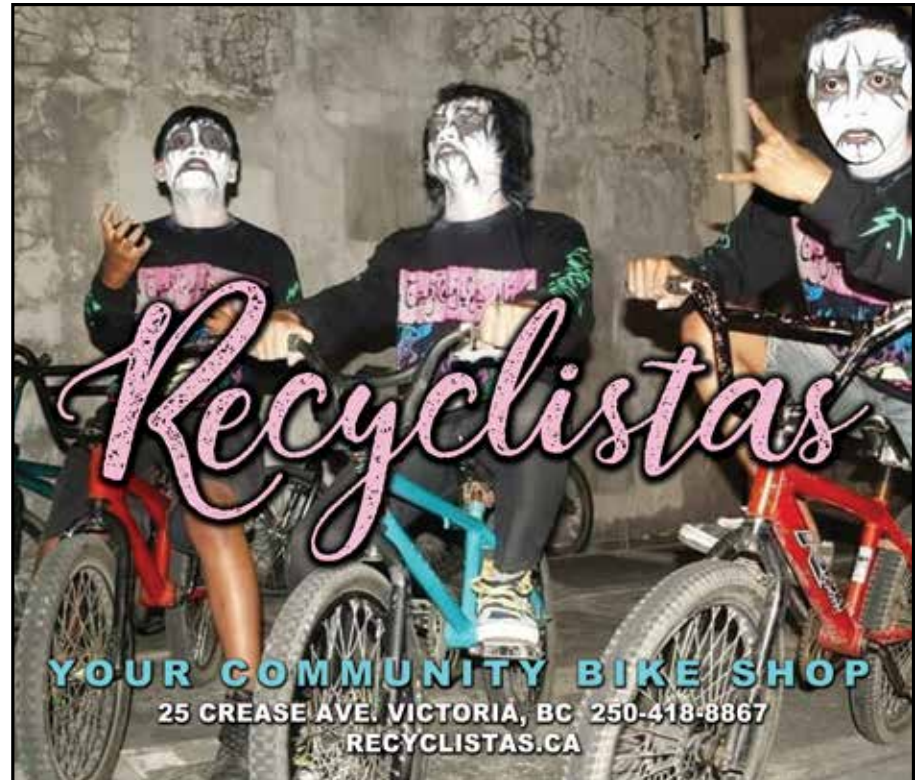
Gob opened the show with a tightly packed set of pop an ollie skate punk excellence! The boys were having

a blast up there and Theo's face was extra rubbery on this particular night. Guitars and vocals were on point. Drums and bass were pounding and finely tuned. They rocked out a crisp batch of new and old bangers. *Give Up The Grudge, No Regrets, Oh! Ellin, Soda, I Hear You Calling.* The hits were there, I just wish they had been given extra time for even more Gob goodness. But I guess they were just obeying the first rule of show business; "Always Leave Them Wanting More." Hope these goobers come back to play another show in Victoria soon.

With Tom pulling double duty in both Gob and Sum 41, he probably needed a breather between sets. Enter PUP to fill the void. Visually and musically upbeat college rock and they didn't exactly grab me by the boo boo. But the crowd seemed to like them,

so what do I know?

It was time for the Big Show. The confetti cannons were loaded to bursting and the fire balls were cranked to maximum. Sum 41 were in the house and they brought the roof down on that sucka. The show ebbed and flowed through the band's discography. Tracks from their first album, 2001's *All Killer No Filler* all the way up to their latest and final release, *Heaven x: Hell*. Their set list on this special swan song evening included *The Hell Song, Landmines, Dopamine, Walking Disaster,*



Makes No Difference, Fat Lip and In Too Deep.

Between the cannons and the flame throwers it was pretty boy punk rock war zone in the mosh pit. Then suddenly things took a chill pill as Deryck Whibley appeared out of the darkness behind a glistening white piano for an even more mellowed out version of *Pieces*.

The encore was blast from the past of MuchMusic video hits and even the most jaded punker would have probably found themselves signing along and remembering a time when they were young and still knew how to have fun.

A good time was had by all. Then all that remained was the aftermath of countless confetti cannons and many torched eyebrows.



Anyone interested in reading about Deryck Whibley's rollercoaster rock star journey, he's just released a book called *Walking Disaster: My Life Through Heaven and Hell*.

-Spike McKenzie

PADDY ROLLING STONE
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**KERRY KING - MUNICIPAL WASTE
- ALIEN WEAPONRY**
Jan 20th, 2025
Commodore Ballroom,
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The big show was Kerry King and Municipal Waste with Alien Weaponry opening. I was stoked when I heard that Kerry King was coming to the Commodore because I've seen Slayer many times and they're one of my faves. Alien Weaponry from New Zealand opened up the show and their Māori influences were on full display both visually and sonically. I've known about this band from about four years ago when a friend showed me some

of their music on YouTube. I thought they were pretty good but seeing them in person was even better. They poured out a number of breakneck songs and all of them were killer. I thoroughly enjoyed their set start to finish.

Then next up on the stage was Municipal Waste. I have seen them play in Vancouver twice before but this time was the frickin' best. These guys are as metal as you can get! The stage props were pretty rad. I loved their radioactive barrels with the zombies coming out of them. They looked like something out of the movie Return of the Living Dead, it was awesome! They ripped into their set with some of their classic songs like Garbage Stomp, Sadistic Magician, Slime and Punishment, You're Cut Off, The Thrashin' of the Christ and The Art of Partying. I loved every second of it! The vocals remind me of the singer from D.R.I. but different. It's the kind of stuff you wanna see a guy doing a stage dive too. The



pit was in a frenzy and reminded me of when I was a teenage metalhead myself, moshing and thrashing in the circle pit. Municipal Waste Is Gonna Fuck You Up! They were great!

Then up was the headliner,

Kerry King, who I know from him playing in Slayer for many years and seeing them the first time when I was 18 with my friend Sam. It was Slayer with Testament opening at the PNE Forum. I was stoked Kerry King was back in town and when he came out and started playing it was like I was there again at that Slayer show. Kerry King has put together a group of heavy hitters to help him continue his quest for metal dominance. There's Paul Bostaph (Slayer) on drums, Kyle Sanders (Skrew) on bass, Phil Demmel (Vio-lence) on guitar, and it's all rounded out by Mark Osegueda



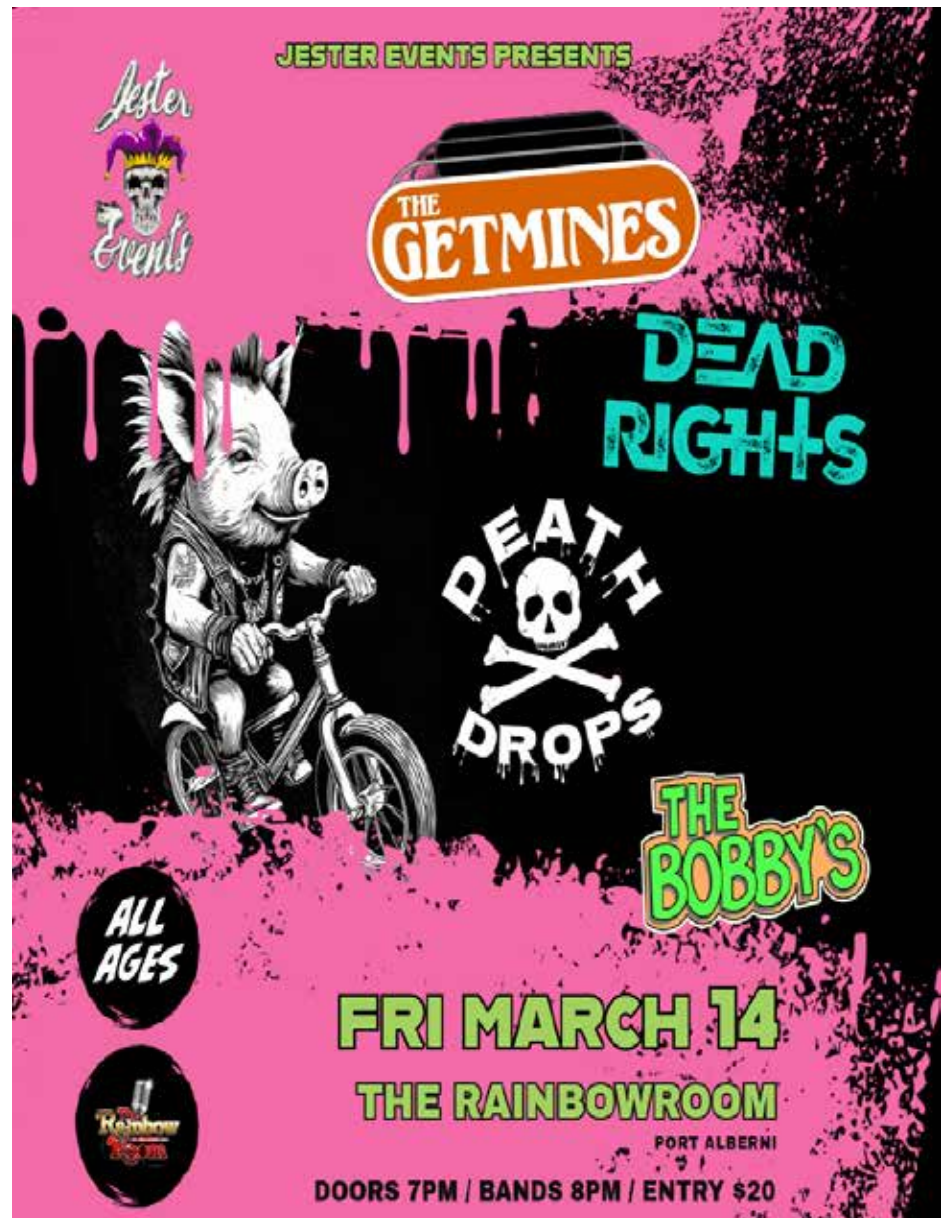
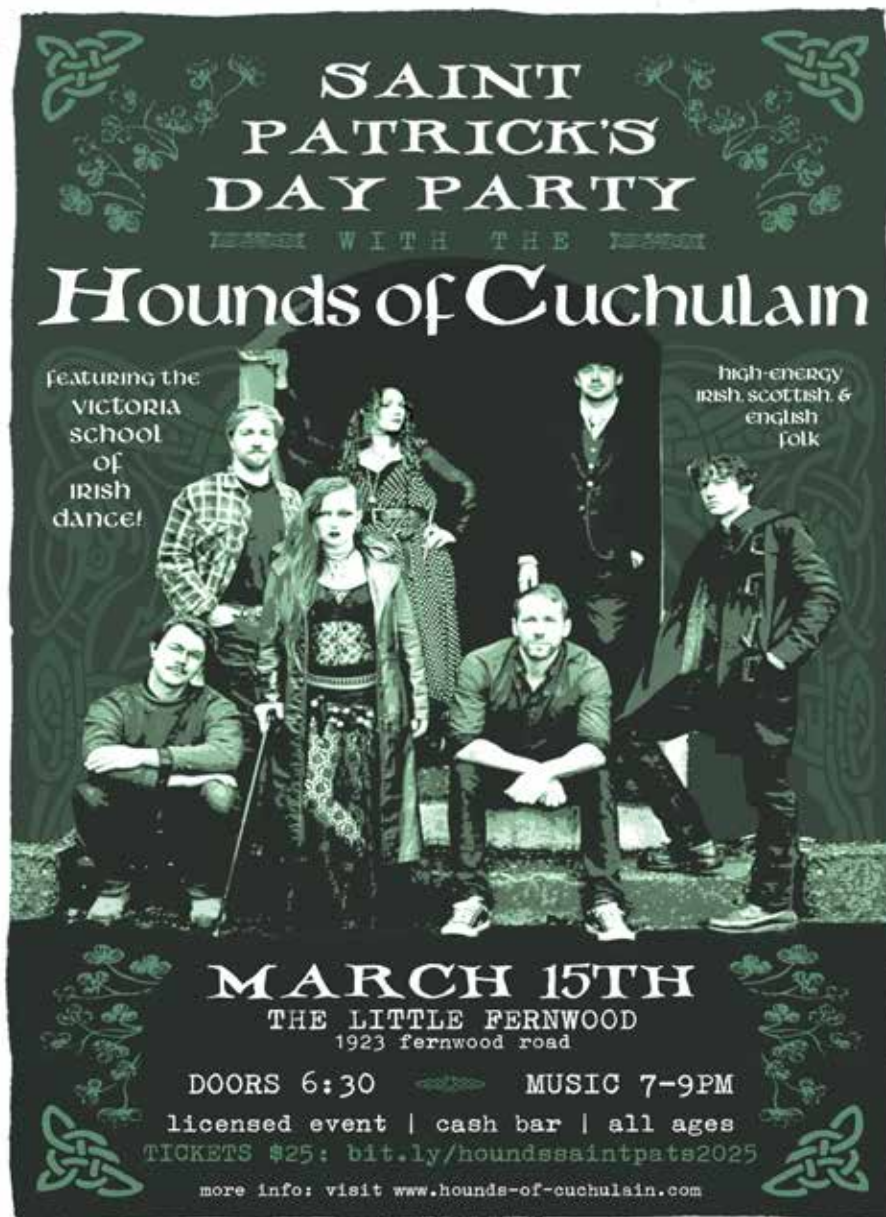
(Death Angel) providing vocals. They did a whole bunch of deadly songs. Mostly they did the Kerry King songs from his album, *From Hell I Rise*, but they played a lot of Slayer songs too. Slayer songs on the set-list for this show were Repentless, Disciple, At Dawn They Sleep, Raining Blood, and Black Magic, which were so good to



heard. The band also rocked a couple classic Paul Di'Anno Iron Maiden songs, Purgatory and Killers, which Kerry King has stated were very influential for him. The sound at the venue was really good and I thought that it was awesome and just seeing them playing up there with Mark the singer of Death Angel, which is another one of my favourite bands of all time. It was amazing and what a great show at the Commodore! The staff were helpful and very nice and I wanna give them some props! Thanks!

-Leif Brooke





2025 Victoria Film Festival Runs Feb 7th to 17th, 2025

After celebrating their thirtieth last year, the Victoria Film Festival is still going strong. This year, I offer my selection of the top 3 films to check out.

-Ed Sum

(S)KIDS

You have never seen a punk rock opera quite like this. (S)KIDS centres on a group of rebellious teens in 1993 as they navigate their last year of high school questioning the authority of the adults in their lives. Scotty, a teenage punk poet, reluctantly moves to the City of Champions in the Canadian Midwest with his parents. His defiant attitude and general dismissal of everyone gets him into trouble on both sides of the law.

The oppressive school principal tries to shake Scotty's spirituous antics while the school's drug dealer, Sammy, eyes Scotty as his latest target to bully. Amid the early troubles, Scotty finds sanctuary in Billy and Craig, two outcasts known as "skids." The three become entwined through their love of music, shared experiences of neglect and abuse, and surging desire to expose the hypocrisy of the authority figures in their Lives.

The Worlds Divide

Victoria-based filmmaker Denver Jackson brings a post-apocalyptic world to life in The Worlds Divide, a film that was animated solely by Jackson himself.

The film begins on a futuristic Earth that war and

famine has consumed. Natomi tries to live a cautious life but when the dangers escalate, her father Terric makes a daring decision to put his children out of harm's way. He transports them to a magical world called Esluna, and the world this young girl finds is not only fantastic but ruled with an iron fist!

Things quickly change when she finds herself in an adventure that can threaten two worlds. When Natomi's father is considered a god, just how everything connects is special. And no prior knowledge is required to enjoy Jackson's Tales of Esluna series. Each is self-contained, and this latest proves he's got lots of stories to tell. Instead of old characters, we meet new ones, and just how it all connects is worth following!

Vampire Zombies...from Space!

When Mary loses her mother at a young age to a freak accident in the tobacco fields, people blame Mary's father. But is this really a case of a rogue farmer killing his wife, or is there something more



unexpected going on? Sure, there have been some weird encounters and unexpected sightings in the sky...but surely that is normal for small town America. Or is it?!!!

From the depths of space, Dracula has devised his most dastardly plan yet—turning the residents of one small American town into his personal army of vampire zombies! Now Mary is all grown up, and they are back, immune to the powers that chased them away years ago, and ready to unleash their evil plan on the somewhat

unsuspecting, and somewhat we-always-knew-there-was-more-going-on town folk. A motley crew consisting of a grizzled detective, a skeptical rookie cop, a chain-smoking greaser, and Mary band together to save the world!

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